

ARGUMENT versus AUTHORITY

WE are always pointing out to those correspondents who protest against what they consider FREEDOM'S "inconsistent intolerance" and "un-anarchistic" attitude to the Church, that we shall always defend the right of the individual to his religious beliefs, but that when it ceases to be a personal matter and enters the political arena, organised and institutionalised as any political party, and with the same intentions of controlling every detail of our lives and thought, then we do not hesitate to attack it for what it is, and in defence of our freedom.

It may be argued, and we think justly, that the convinced christian, no less than the convinced socialist or anarchist, cannot isolate his belief from his daily actions and contacts with his fellow-beings, but that, on the contrary, these will always be informed by his belief. To such an argument the anarchist cannot but say that while disagreeing with him he is the first to respect his integrity as a practising Christian. It is only when, by his identification with a centralised organisation, he seeks to impose his views on all and sundry that he as an individual, just as much as the organisation of which he is a part, becomes a potential menace which we must expose and challenge as thoroughly and uncompromisingly as we do any authoritarian party or political organisation.

The Church militant is as much a threat to progress and freedom as any government. The Vatican and the Kremlin are equally factories of thought-control, and the Pope as astute a politician as is to be found anywhere in the world to-day. And if confirmation of this is required one has but to read the Pope's address to a meeting of the Church hierarchy held in Rome earlier this month (reported on another page).

The complete subjection of the individual to the authority of the Church is made brutally clear in the Pope's statement when he said that instructions and propositions published on matters within the moral law by the Pope for the whole Church and by bishops for their dioceses, cannot be rejected on the ground that "the strength of the authority is no more than the strength of the arguments. On the contrary, "even though to someone certain declarations of the Church may not seem proved by the arguments put forward, his obligation to obey still remains."

THIS infallibility of the Pope in the Church has its equivalent in the arguments which have been used in the current row between the *Tribune* group and the Labour Party Executive. In his interim reply to the long statement by the Editors of *Tribune*, the Labour Party Secretary, Mr. Morgan Phillips, states that his Executive has never suggested that minorities should be denied the "right to argue and criticise".

"That issue—he writes—is not in question, but it must be understood that majorities no less than minorities have their rights and duties in a democratic organisation. It is a fundamental principle of democracy that policy decisions should be based on the majority view. The Labour party as a democratic organisation, while respecting the rights of minorities, is entitled to expect that minorities within its ranks will accept and observe majority decisions."

Under democracy then, one has the right to "argue and criticise" until the vote is taken. Then suddenly the majority assumes the Pope's rôle of infallibility, and to paraphrase his words "the strength

of the authority is more than the strength of the arguments".

FROM the foregoing it is clear that we believe in the infallibility neither of the majority nor of the minority. We believe that an organisation which invariably takes its decisions by the majority vote is inevitably open to all kinds of manoeuvres, behind-the-scenes alignments, and dishonesty. The "fundamental principle of democracy", as Morgan Phillips calls it, can be seen at work any day in the House of Commons where the party with most votes always swamps "the strength of the arguments", or at the last Labour Party conference where the neatest somersault of the season was performed by the Woodworkers' leaders (by special arrangement) to provide the Executive with just the number of votes required to give them a majority! Need we add that minority rule is even worse?

We believe in a society where the majority will respect the minority, not only in recognising their "right to argue and criticise" but also in not demanding that they should participate in those activities with which the minority is not in agreement. There will always be minorities, even in an anarchist society, and it is possible that among them will be individuals yearning for the "good old days". But the health of Society depends not on the "solid majority" which, as Malatesta once wrote is "by its very nature backward, conservative, the enemy of that which is new, lazy in thought and action", but on individuals, on minorities, for it is they who are always the harbingers of new and vital ideas.

Sense of Guilt

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and obviously so, between the two lands which the moral range divides. The abolition of conscience, besides, must be a conscious act or it has no meaning or value. Being conscious and being a choice of the unknown and unprecedented, being, in short, an act of freedom, it remains signally human in the existential equivalence of freedom and guilt.

The way out, therefore, is not beyond but by the side of good and evil, into those activities which are morally neutral, although their choice and repercussions are not. Thus, for example, artistic pursuits, hobbies, pastimes and, when reduced to an automatic sequence, alternance of work and relaxation. Only with an abnormally sensitized moral awareness, and as a discomfort of the brain more than the heart, can guilt be felt in relation to words, pictures or things. So, by shunning personal contacts or excluding from them the unapproved and the unforeseen, by preventing the unforeseen from emerging clearly into one's heart, conscience loses all relevance, and is thrown overboard. There is in our day a powerful trend in this direction, but it does not do away with evil, while yielding good of a dubious kind. Responsibility is alienated, but its alienation still remains a matter of conscience, and is liable to a most rude awakening. Somebody has to decide what others have to shun and exclude, what is going to be approved and forseen. A mistake in decision or simply the existence of two or more sets of people who have taken upon themselves to decide for the many bring eventually upon the latter a sense of guilt of crushing proportions such as conscience as a constant companion never allows to develop.

THERE is a use of psycho-analysis which binding individual happiness with adaptation to social surroundings almost openly works for alienation of responsibilities. The other earlier and independent use of it leads to a similar result through so-called sublimization. As a theory mainly concerned with childhood experiences and aiming among other things at freeing the psyche from sense of guilt resulting from the Oedipus complex it does not reach the existential depths which Calderon succinctly exposed when saying that the greatest crime of man is that of having been born. Sense of guilt cannot entirely be eradicated unless one is completely forgetful of the facts of birth and death. To be born in order to die is to be waiting for the consummation of a sentence, and there is no sentence without guilt, whether it is made to lie with the person passing the sentence or with the one whom it is passed upon.

Threats to Academic Freedom

THE attempts by University authorities to censor the magazines and newspapers published by students, which was the subject of the article "More Obscenity" (FREEDOM, 6/11/54) are by no means unique.

During the Trinity Term 1954 a light-hearted, anti-religious article appeared in the *South Westerner*, the organ of the Guild of Undergraduates of University College, Exeter, in which the writer pointed out that the real object of worship of the vast majority of Christians is not the metaphysical God to whom they give verbal allegiance, but the concrete realizations of all the false values and superstitions on which the power of the ruling group, and the smug security of the middle class are based. It pointed out in particular two of the greatest crimes of religion; that it gave an ideological basis to the violent oppression of peoples by governments, and that it taught an unhealthy and unnatural code of sexual behaviour.

The first response to this came from a regular columnist of the *Western Times* who, on the basis of the issue of the *South Westerner* which contained the article referred to above, and in addition reports of efforts by the Guild Council to establish a licensed bar on its premises, and to obtain permission for students in Halls of Residence to entertain members of the opposite sex in their bedrooms, concluded that the University was not fulfilling its true function, and that "we should be more careful about the vast sums of money that we were pouring into our Colleges to train our future leaders".

However, the sinister part of the affair occurred at a meeting of the Cornwall County Council on November 9th. An Alderman Lane stated that in his opinion the U.C.S.W. was "Full of Reds, and full of muck", and that "a student who had recently left had written to his mother

complaining in those terms". He quoted the report in the *Western Times* and proposed that, in order to bring the college to its senses, the County should continue its financial support. Other councillors agreed, and said that it was a very serious matter if our young people were going to be subjected to such scurrilous influences.

Although Alderman Lane's motion was eventually defeated, and Cornwall County Council is well known for its rather crudely reactionary outlook (as for instance in its dismissal, about two years ago, of a teacher who had been a Conscientious Objector about ten years previously), the fact that it was put forward, and found support both in the Council and in the local press, shows on what a flimsy basis the so-called independence of the Universities rests. The fact that the government hands over large sums of money without having any formal legislative authority over its disposal, is something which the idealist believers in Constitutional Democracy point to in support of their ideas, but it seems that this depends more on the fact that University authorities always agree with the government anyway, than on any love of freedom. The attitude of Alderman Lane and his supporters shows that, if it became necessary to the interests

of the government, it could reduce its centres of education to a position of dependence similar to that in the openly totalitarian states.

The idea of students providing an intelligent and conscious opposition to the present state of affairs on a quantitative basis seems a little far-fetched to those of us with experience in this field, but it is fair to point out that demonstrations by students against oppressive governments have often initiated far wider and all-embracing movements of protest. We look with suspicion on the Marxist hypothesis that the academic education of the sons and daughters of working people will automatically effect their radicalisation, but it may be possible that a higher proportion of those who do revolt do so intelligently; that is, along libertarian rather than authoritarian lines.

Because of this, one of the main planks in the programme of any group aiming to seize absolute power is the suppression of academic freedom, which is proceeding apace in the U.S.A. and in South Africa. Although it may not now be a conscious and obvious part of the British government's policy, it could quite easily become one, and hence it is necessary to oppose it now when it does occur, with as much enlightened public opinion as can be mustered. P.H.

The 'Tribune' Statement

A REASONED and spirited reply to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party who rapped the knuckles of the *Tribune* Editorial Board for their "unwarranted, irresponsible and scurrilous attack on the leadership of the Transport & General Workers' Union" during the recent dock strike, appears in last week's *Tribune*. A letter from Morgan Phillips, secretary of the Labour Party, invites the Editorial Board to state how they reconcile their attack on the leadership of the T. & G.W.U. with their membership of the party. The reply has to be placed before the National Executive Committee this month.

On the specific issue of Deakin and the dock strike *Tribune* quotes copiously from Deakin's own public pronouncements at the time of the strike, and one gets the impression of a frustrated man seeing some of the power slipping from his grasp hitting out aimlessly at targets erected by himself, in this instance the rôle of the C.P. in the strike. We pointed out in FREEDOM at the time that following their usual policy the Communists would try to make political capital out of the strike—although at the beginning they were in opposition to any attempt to break with the T. & G.W.U. Their influence however, was negligible, a fact that seems to be acknowledged by most commentators except Deakin who, in an attempt to save his face and maintain the illusion of power over the strike, publicly declared in the official journal of the T. & G.W.U. the *Record*, that the Stevedores' union is led "by a moronic crowd of irresponsible adventurers, who do not know how much they are being exploited by foreign elements for purposes they do not see or understand".

As *Tribune* points out these words could be rightly described as scurrilous, and were obviously designed to forestall any sympathy which might have been growing for the dockers. Deakin must have known, as we have been led to understand, that Barrett, leader of the Stevedores, is a catholic and an ex-Communist out of favour with the party (unless the foreign influence referred to the Vatican). Further, that Deakin's attitude to a union affiliated to the T.U.C. was a clear denial that the rank and file had any genuine grievance and that this stand taken in opposition to the workers by a powerful trade union leader might have considerable influence on the employers to the detriment of the rank and file.

The National Executive of the Labour Party will have a task before them sustaining their accusation that the comments in *Tribune* were ill-timed and irresponsible, without exposing Deakin's far more irresponsible attack on the rank and file trade unionists who pay his salary.

Socialism and Democracy

On the wider issue of the right to free discussion and to criticise the policies of a democratic party, the writers of the article maintain that they joined the Labour Party because they "believed that democratic socialism offered the best instrument available for the enlargement of human freedom". They hold that the whole history of the labour movement has been one of criticism and re-valuation, and that one of the events which led to the formation of the Labour Party was the attacks made by Keir

Hardie on Henry Broadhurst, at that time Secretary of the T.U.C. Further, that the origin of the T. & G.W.U. itself was a revolt led by Ben Tillet and Tom Mann against an older "trade union leadership which had become inadequate to meet the needs of a new age". This attitude they declare is the only basis for a truly democratic organisation and the act of the executive in sending a reprimanding note lays the executive open to charges of totalitarianism.

Freedom and Power

Elsewhere in this issue the dangers of the monolithic organisations are discussed. These dangers must be apparent to the Editors of *Tribune*, and while we do not doubt their sincerity in believing that freedom and liberty can be discussed and practised within a hierarchical structure their own experience over the last few years must have shaken that belief. It is quite obvious that the 'Bevanite' group do not command the support necessary for them to over-ride the right wing section of the Labour Party, and as long as the rank and file put up with Deakin whose union supplies the biggest single support for the Labour Party their success seems unlikely. If the Editors of *Tribune* feel so strongly the principles of freedom and democracy the only honest thing to do is to leave the Labour Party, trusting in the good sense of the rank and file to support them. If however, we are any judge of political events this is precisely what they do not want. In other words, once in power the desire to hold on to it is stronger than principle, even when it is motivated by the belief that it is the only means to freedom. Further, even although the executive might regard the 'Bevanites' as a growing irritant it is unlikely that they will run the risk of any loss of support which may ensue by expelling them. The conclusions would be then that political expedience will demand an uneasy alliance until such time as either group feel powerful enough to make the final break. R.M.

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Face the Facts!

Addressing the Royal Empire Society in Colombo last week, Sir Edwin Wijeyeratne, former High Commissioner for Ceylon in London asked his audience:

"Do you realise that out of 560 million people in the Commonwealth there are only 75 million whites, including the people of Britain?"

"In the face of these figures an entirely new conception of the Commonwealth is necessary. In this conception there is no room for apartheid, a 'white Australia' policy or restriction of Asian immigration into Canada."

Referring to South Africa's disfranchisement of people of mixed race in Natal, Sir Edwin said:

"We are amazed to find that a million people are to be denied their fundamental rights as human beings."

—Agencies.

