

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice."

—H. D. THOREAU.

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Threepence

"Raise Retirement Age to 68" Says Phillips Committee

The Tragedy of Old Age

SINCE the expectation of life in this country has been steadily rising for quite a number of years, one can well imagine that every generation has been aware of the existence of the problem of the old, and painting a gloomier picture as the proportion of old people to those of working age has increased. In 1911 the proportion was one in 15; by 1970 it is estimated that it will be three in fifteen of the population. The prolongation of life—thanks in the main to the great strides made by medical science—instead of being a cause for general rejoicing, seems instead to be creating a national problem which fills young and old with anxiety and gloom, and politicians with headaches which were absent when they were engaged in world-wide destruction involving many more millions of young productive lives than there are Old Age Pensioners. And the organising and financing of ten years of cold war, hot war, and colonial wars have been carried out with less hesitation than the Government's recently announced decision to give the old an extra 7/6 a week. And we have heard of no Committee being set up to enquire whether we could afford to spend almost half of the nation's revenue on war preparations. But the problem of old age, which personally affects politicians less than ordinary working people, is one which calls for the setting up of a Committee, and the publishing of a Report. A Report, be it noted, on the "Economic and Financial Problems of providing for Old Age", not on the problems of loneliness, and of looking after and attending to the needs of the old.

the same working conditions as men then they should also retire at the same age. In effect the way the Committee tackles the problem is to penalise old people for living longer than their fathers and grandfathers did, by artificially curtailing their lives by three years. It is all very well to say that old people prefer to go on working. Some obviously do because they enjoy the work they are doing and the company of their fellow-workers. But generally speaking they are compelled to continue at work because the alternative of trying to live on the old age pension is an even less attractive proposition.

Commenting editorially on the Committee's proposals, the *Manchester Guardian* takes the view that

with increasing longevity it is not unreasonable to expect the span of working life to extend too, and the committee's recommendation seems in keeping with the facts of life to-day.

Such a view is "not unreasonable" only if we accept the twisted values of to-day, "the facts of life to-day" as the *M.G.* calls them, which confuse the means with the ends. The committee takes the line that *we live to work*. We instead would wish to see a society in which *we worked to live*. And we think this latter view is generally held by those who do not visualise society as an economic problem, a balance sheet that has to be balanced, man-power that has to be employed for the sake of keeping everybody busy, production for the sake of production.

There is something ridiculous as well as sinister in such a philosophy which reduces life to a question of work; where Man's discovery of the ways to prolong life simply means that he is enabled to go on working longer (so often in work which is only of profit to his employers, and of little value to society). The tragedy of our world is that most people spend so much of their lives working for a wage that they never learn how to live. And old age when it comes has no compensations

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Incitement by Radio

According to a Reuter report from New York:

Russia is seeking the endorsement by the United Nations of a 1936 League of Nations convention banning international broadcasts which "incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of territory." Britain and the Soviet Union, but not the United States, are among the 28 signatories. The Soviet delegation introduced the proposal yesterday in the Social Committee, which is debating freedom of information.

One presumes that the propaganda in dozens of different languages broadcast day and night from Russia are not counted as incitement. Somehow one feels that the U.S. refusal to sign is less shocking than the Russian proposal is hypocritical!

A New Crime in Kenya

Because of a number of fires started in Nairobi, the Kenya Government has added a new Regulation making it a crime, punishable by prison sentences of up to 14 years, for any African to be caught "having incendiary material without reasonable excuse".

SYNDICALISM & RECENT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

ONE of the results of the successful outcome of the dock strike has been the firm establishment of the National Amalgamated Dockers and Stevedores as a militant union within the Port of London, to whom even those workers remaining organisationally within the Transport and General will look to for guidance rather than to their own 'leaders', and also its probable extension to all the major ports of the country. This inevitably raises the question of the attitude for anarchists to adopt towards such unions.

The relations between branches of the extended union are not yet apparent, but it is highly probable that after having waged such a struggle against one set of leaders, the dockers will be chary of putting too much trust in another set. In other words, they are in a position to demand whatever degree of local autonomy they desire, and to keep all the power of the organisation in their own hands. Furthermore, together with the Watermen and Lightermen, the N.A.S.D. will constitute an industrial organisation covering the ports of the country, and of a convenient size for ensuring that it does function in the interests of its members, so long as they keep their eyes open for any potential 'leaders'. In addition, although not through its express desire, it has no entanglements with the T.U.C.!

It is clear that, while being far from the anarcho-syndicalist ideal of union organisation, the growing portworkers' movement is much nearer to that ideal than the general unions which the workers are leaving, and one could almost say that it will function as a revolutionary syndicalist movement to the same extent that definite syndicalist ideas are accepted by its members. In the other unions, anarchists who do try to work within them find that the structure is such as to defeat their efforts, unless they adopt non-anarchist methods.

All vital libertarian conclusions must inevitably be the results of personal ex-

perience. Now the type of experience gained from participating in a strike, and reaping the visible fruits of direct action is one which is shared by a great number of people at the same time, and hence is likely to produce obvious results, while that leading to an anarchist approach to sex, education, etc., is an individual experience. This is why, under tumultuous economic conditions, a libertarian movement firmly rooted among the people will find that the rate of growth of its syndicalist branch will outstrip that of the other aspects. Similarly, many British workers are showing that even without our prompting, they know how to use direct methods, although they would never dream of sending their children to progressive schools, or adopting an anarchist outlook on life in general. We may regret the fact that not all militant workers will become anarchists, but it will happen whatever our attitude towards it. The anarchist movement is not the sole repository of intelligent ideas, although it is where they are most logically understood and brought under a unified philosophy, and many socialists, both inside and outside the Labour Party realise the need for rank and file control of industrial organisations.

My conclusion is therefore, that anarchists should welcome any signs of unions being set on the right track, even if they are not quite as far along it as we would wish. At the same time anarchist members should attempt to introduce the wider aspects of our philosophy to their comrades on every appropriate occasion. If an influential revolutionary syndicalist movement does arise in Britain it is more likely to come as a development of groups such as the N.A.S.D. or the railwaymen's Mutual Aid Society, forced by the logic of events to abandon completely their political ties (or being expelled by the politicians), than by the creation now of theoretically correct syndicalist organisations. P.H.

THE Phillips Committee in its Report proposes that retirement ages for pensions should be stepped up from 65 to 68 for men and from 60 to 63 for women. The woman member of the committee added a minority view that if women wanted

American Medals for Dictators

Devere Allen writes in *Worldover Press*:

Totalitarianism is a peculiar poison which first ruins its victims and then affects those who come in contact with them. Look at the situation in which Russia now finds itself as it faces the world, and at the world's reaction. Unless everything is to go up in the flames of atomic war, the Russian rulers must convince the non-Communist world that they really want peace. Equally, the non-Communist world must hope for a change in Russia that is genuine. There are certainly changes in the attitude of Moscow, many of them marked; but no one dares take them on trust because of past deceit and because the Soviet method is still that of dictatorship.

But we too have become infected. Who in his right mind could have believed that a man of Dwight Eisenhower's character and stature would bestow such a medal as the U.S. Legion of Merit on two of the world's most notorious totalitarians, within a single month? One went to the Spaniard, General Muñoz Grandes, who commanded the Blue Division that fought for Hitler, and now another has gone to that arch-dictator of Venezuela, enemy of democracy and true Pan-Americanism, "President" Marcos Pérez Jiménez. While we keep on assuring Asians and Europeans that we are the defenders of democracy, we keep on showing them by our actions that we revere some of the cheapest and most ruthless totalitarians dredged up in our time from the swamps of intrigue.

Pity the Poor Postman!

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year—and thank Christ, says the postman. What is for most people a period of jubilation is for Post Office workers a time to be dreaded, for according to an estimate given to a press conference last week by the Postmaster-General, no less than 700 million letters or cards will be popped through letter-boxes this Christmas.

This fantastic figure—an average of 14 for everyone in the British Isles—will be concentrated nearly all in the fortnight between this appearing in print and Boxing Day, and over the last five days the rate of posting will be ten times the normal.

Post Office workers have been encouraged to feel a bit better about this by being given a rise in pay, and since it is back-dated to July 1, the increase will make its first appearance for them as a nice sort of Christmas bonus.

This will tend to cover up the fact that negotiations have actually been going on since last June, and that the increases vary considerably, according to the grade of work, from 3s. a week to 13s. 6d. This has been granted for workers in the 'manipulative' grades—postmen, sorters, telephonists, telegraphists, postal and telegraph officers, and radio operators, and has not been accepted without either misgivings or strings.

At a special conference of the Union of Post Office Workers at Bournemouth, delegates voted 2,050 to 886 for accepting the award, and the opposition to its acceptance was partly because of the conditions attached to it—mainly that no new claim was to be made until the report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service should be considered (when will that be?) and that some workers were not getting a fair increase.

For the technical grades, the Post Office Engineering Union has accepted a cost-of-living increase for its 70,000 members. Their increases range from 4s. 9d. a week to 9s. 6d., and are also

back-dated to July 1. Here one can note, however, that the P.O.E.U. asked for a 6 per cent. rise last June pending a settlement of a value-of-work claim put in last January!

The Post Office, then, has coughed up just in time to keep its workers happy through the Christmas panic. One factor which is upsetting them, though, is the decision of football pool promoters to issue pool coupons for matches fixed for Christmas Day (a Saturday). The Manchester Branch of the U.P.O.W. has condemned this decision, pointing out that its members are already working a 14-hour day, which is enough, and the over 10 million letters sent out by the pools each week will help to delay seasonal greetings.

But Mr. Charles Geddes, Gen. Sec. of the union, who said at the conference mentioned above that his union would

not hesitate to be militant, to show its strength—but not now—said he could not imagine Manchester's attitude to the pools coupons becoming a national issue.

Certainly, since the Christmas Season provides a glorious opportunity for commercialism in practically every field, it is expecting a lot of Littlewood, Vernon and Company that they should lose profit in that week—to say nothing of the Post Office's own income on 10 million tuppenny-ha'penny stamps, with which Mr. Geddes is very properly concerned.

Anarchists and the like, being somewhat paganistic, probably tend to send and receive somewhat less than the 14-per-person average for the community. Some I have known, however, manufacture their own rather unconventional, not to say irreverent, greeting cards. To these rugged individualists might I merely say: Pity the poor postman; think of those 700 million letters and cards, and if you must post, post early. Last dates for arrival by Christmas Day are: parcels, Sat., Dec. 18; letters and cards, Tues., Dec. 21. P.S.

PROGRESS OF A DEFICIT! WEEK 48

Deficit on Freedom £720
Contributions received £730
SURPLUS £10

November 26 to December 3

Watsonville: E.S. £1/15; San Francisco: R. per L.D. £1/15; Dayton: W.R. 9/6; Dovercourt: W.B.W. 3/-; Opington: C.K. 3d.; Belfast: D.M. 3/-; Manchester: P.H. 13/6; Margate: T.L. 3/-; London: Anon. 7/6; London: L.S. 3/-; Cambridge: Anon. 5/-; Hassle: G.T. 1/6; Stroud: S.L.R. 1/6; Leeds: M.F. 3/-; Bolton: W.H.B. 5/-; London: A.B.F. £2; London: J.S.* 3/-; Sheffield: C.A.R. 3/-; Wigan: E.H. 3/-; Dublin: Anon. 3/-; Huddersfield: J.D. 5/6; Hayes: H.D. 3/-; London: D.R.* 5/-; Avening: N.H. 1/6; Cromer: M.J.S. 1/6; London: W.E.C. 3/-; Stratford-on-Avon: C.C. 3/-; Aldershot: D.M.B. 6/6; Rochester: D.J. £1/16/6.

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1954 TOTAL TO DATE ... £730 11 0

Behind the Incense Curtain

LAST year, the Pope of Rome conferred on General Franco the Supreme Order of Jesus, thus establishing the Dictator's importance to the Vatican and to European politics.

Two weeks ago, the Vatican made another concession, not so much to Franco, as to Protestant America, by curtailing the powers of the anti-protestant, Pedro Cardinal Segura, Archbishop of Seville, and appointing an archbishop coadjutor with rights and functions equal to Segura's and with the "right of succession".

Cardinal Segura, who knew nothing of the appointment until it was actually made, was on a visit to Rome, but it appears that he was not favoured by the Pope's confidences.

Segura was opposed to Franco because he considered him too tolerant towards other religions! Such toleration, he held, was based on the false assumption that "all religions are equally acceptable in the sight of God."

Intolerance and fanaticism are not, however, exclusive to Cardinal Segura. He has been removed from his job, not because either Franco or the Pope are lovers of freedom, but because he is an embarrassment at this stage in the development of European politics. When the days of the "meritorious Inquisition" return there will be a job once more for Cardinal Segura.

Conscription in U.S.A. to be Extended

It is reported from New York that Defence Secretary Wilson has announced the intention of the Administration to ask Congress in the New Year to extend the present Selective Service Act, which expires in June, for another four years.

IN PRAISE OF IDLENESS

IN PRAISE OF IDLENESS, by
Bertrand Russell. (George
Allen & Unwin Ltd.)

BERTRAND RUSSELL is one of those curious writers who are profound when they write on trivial or seemingly trivial subjects, but who are extremely superficial when it comes to the apparently big problems of life. He has little answer to the solution of the problem of war except world government, and a string of platitudes and pious hopes. His "Marriage and Morals" is an excellent encyclopedia of other men's ideas. Yet, in a slight essay of a few pages in length, he hits upon one of the fundamental diseases of our society.

This is the morbid fear of people, or oneself, being idle. He does not attempt much of an explanation of how the trouble started, but he analyses it well, and shows it up for what it is, a grotesque and harmful superstition. He tells the story of a visitor in Naples who saw twelve beggars lying basking in the sun, and offered a lira to the laziest. Eleven of them jumped up at once to claim it, so he handed it to the twelfth.

He divides work into two kinds; "first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill paid; the second is pleasant and highly paid. . . . What our society does is to glorify the first, but to arrange matters so that everyone wants to do the second. To work is considered a noble duty, but all the world tries to raise

itself to a position where it can tell others how to work, and when, and where.

Russell points out that modern methods of production have made it possible for everyone to have ample leisure, doing only four hours work a day (this was written some years ago, so probably it could be even less now), if only the work were to be equitably shared out. But what happens in practice is that some are overworked while others have no work at all. Unemployment is not a pressing problem just now, but there is no reason to suppose that it may not be so again in the future.

Thus over-production, instead of meaning more leisure for all, means some are overworked, others starve, and others simply live parasitically. "In this way it is insured that the unavoidable leisure shall cause misery all round, instead of being a universal source of happiness. Can anything more insane be imagined?"

This glorification of work does not only apply in the capitalist societies. It applies also in the U.S.S.R., where as fast as production develops new schemes are introduced, which involve still more sacrifices and still more hard work, and thus the goal of the paradise of plenty recedes for ever and ever, although it is (in theory at least) being continually pursued.

Russell considers that this doctrine of the nobility of work is the product of a class society, and there is no doubt that he is right. It is clearly in the interests of the rulers to preach the value and the duty of industry to those whom they exploit. At the same time, as he himself shows, they frequently get caught up in their own doctrine. Many capitalists slave as much as the least of their employees, and indeed regard their doing so as a sort of justification for driving their employees hard. It seems clear therefore that his explanation is far from being the whole of the story. The gospel of hard work also links up with the religious idea that the world is a place of evil and suffering, or, if it is not, it jolly well ought to be, and we'll make it so!

If people had more leisure, there is little danger, as some think, of their becoming bored. This is rather like those who used to argue that if the poor did not work they would take to drink. The truth is, that if people had plenty of leisure, they would find time to learn how to amuse themselves. Under present conditions most are too tired, mentally as well as physically, to do much

more than go to the cinema after their day's work. The modern mass entertainments spoon-feed their devotees. One watches adventures on the screen, but one does not have them oneself in real life. One watches football matches, but has neither the time nor the energy to play the game oneself. Moralists exclaim bitterly at this state of affairs, and bewail the passing of the old country dances, fairs, and pastimes, even the grim Victorian household which had its piano, and those who could play it. But this is due to the very attitude of duty and industry that these same moralists so often heartily approve of, when they talk of the "laziness" of modern man. No, men are not lazy. They are apathetic, and naturally so. They live to work, they do not work to live.

Occasionally there will be found those who quote with approval the lines of W. H. Davies:

"What is life, if full of care,

We have no time to stand and stare?"

But this is poetry, and can therefore be dismissed as pardonable romantic nonsense, to be quoted and ignored. The fundamental characteristic of authoritarian society is that it is orientated away from life, and all that is natural, spontaneous, and free. Creative work is reduced to the minimum, but grinding, or just simply boring, labour is regarded as noble and right. We still hear talk of "the dignity of labour", and many workers are proud of the hard and dangerous work they do, but it is still barbarous for society to exact it from them.

"If a man does not work, neither shall he eat", said the apostle, and he ate, but that was all the work he did."—Multatuli. Considering what work means in our society, it is not surprising that as many people as can afford it avoid it altogether. They should however try to better the lot of their fellowmen, since they have the time and the opportunity. "The morality of work is the morality of slaves, and the modern world has no need of slavery."

There is a certain Puritanical attitude to spending money too, which is equally absurd. Society compels everyone whom it can to slave their guts out producing things to buy, yet regards the man who spends on a lavish scale, and therefore provides employment (like Russell himself I should imagine) by buying these same products, as a worthless fellow and a spendthrift. If, on the other hand, he invests it in some scheme that goes crash,

he is sympathised with, although the whole thing may have been a complete swindle from start to finish, and of no use to society. For example, the phoney oil wells drilled near Kings Lynn in Norfolk, and whose enormous derricks still stand as monuments to human gullibility. If one cannot invest, one must at least save—it is sinful to spend.

I myself cannot see Bertrand Russell's ideas on this subject being carried out in an authoritarian society. Russell does not push his ideas to their logical conclusions. For instance, this is what he has to say about governments:

"One of the commonest things to do with savings is to lend them to some Government. In view of the fact that the bulk of the public expenditure of most civilised Governments consists in

payment for past wars or preparation for future wars, the man who lends his money to a Government is in the same position as the bad men in Shakespeare who hire murderers. The net result of the man's economical habits is to increase the armed forces of the State to which he lends his savings. Obviously it would be better if he spent the money, even if he spent it in drink and gambling."

This essay was written in 1935, and the writer's attitude to Government may have changed since then, for he now advocates a world State. However, if he cannot, we at least can push his ideas to their logical conclusions. Which I am convinced is nothing less than anarchy.

ARTHUR W. ULOTH.

History and Horror

IN a letter to the Editor of the *Times* about three weeks ago Herbert Read held shortcomings in the present educational system partly responsible for the popularity of the so-called horror comics among certain children. He particularly lamented the unexciting way in which history is taught. If his criticism were heeded in responsible quarters one possibility is that history masters would have to take a course of horrorcomology in order at least to make sure that the thrills and creeps it will be their duty to excite their pupils with are more refined and intense than those which American horror comics now indiscriminately provide. It will be then a resounding proof that the present hue and cry against the latter is nobly inspired.

History, we have proudly been taught, is not a hunting-ground for interesting anecdotes or exemplified moral lessons. Thucydides and Polybius, Tacitus and Machiavelli, though shining with individual light among a whole host of pedestrian chroniclers, collectors of backstairs gossip, and good prose writers, have long been superseded. Thanks to Giovan Battista Vico and Hegel, though we may dispense ourselves from thanking them, history is now understood and presented as a rational thing, the unfolding of a wonderful pattern, all-including and all-explaining, and yet so simple, so spiritual and pure, that all other disciplines have to bow before it as they were formerly supposed to do before theology. Emphasis on critical interpretation and use of records, prominence given to economic changes and social conditions, preference

for the monograph, search for racial or other constants, isolation of civilizational forms, and other innovations and deviations in the last 150 years have not essentially altered the rational outlook according to which human events can be selected and ordered in a chain of causes and consequences, the *dramatis personae* are isms and ations, and their inevitable moulds origin and development, influences and trends.

So at least in the higher schools and institutions, and in some countries more than others. At a less academic level history is a congeries of badly constructed plays or else material for day-dreams, the manly counterfoil of that type of fiction one finds in women's magazines. The art which certainly is in both consists in centring everything round some wonderful or endearing hero with whom the reader falls in love or is self-identified. In history, particular care is taken that the hero is from the country to whose children happens to be taught while those characters are blackened or ignored who under another light could cast a shadow on the accepted standards and régime of the day.

In the best cases history is a selection of human acts made meaningful by their concatenation in time and by the permanence of geographical features where humans are still acting and will continue to act. The selection, however, is arbitrary in the first place, and it is made even more arbitrary by the selection of words that couch it in knowable form. In history that is taught this selection of words is of overriding importance, and a careful analysis of it will reveal a great deal about what matters to the teacher, or rather what he has been taught should matter to his pupils, but very little if anything about the existential reality to which the words supposedly refer.

Take for instance the battle of Waterloo. Here is an account of it by Sutherland Menzies, purposefully chosen for its brevity:

"Never perhaps was any defeat more bloody or more disastrous than that which Napoleon was there destined to sustain. He had issued his orders, and viewed the battle from a convenient distance; and an officer who stood near him affirmed that 'his astonishment at the resistance of the British was extreme; his agitation became violent; he took snuff by handfuls at the repulse of each charge.' At last he took the officer by the arm saying, 'The affair is over—we have lost the day—let us be off.' In this heartless manner, and thinking only of himself, Napoleon abandoned an army which was wholly devoted to him."

I leave it to the reader to analyze the choice of fact and words. Turning to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for some enlightenment on the adjective 'bloody' at the beginning of the passage, I find the following details: "on the 18th June alone the French lost 40,000 men, the Prussians 7,000, and the English 15,000. On an area of roughly 3 square miles there lay 45,000 bodies between wounded and dead." There you have horror for

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THEATRE

Thornton Wilder's THE MATCHMAKER

THORNTON WILDER'S new play, *The Matchmaker* (at the Haymarket Theatre, London), in spite of being described superficially as a farce, is a tender and moving plea for true freedom and communion to transform our lives, and especially those whose potentialities for fuller existence and self-realization are destroyed in dreary routine, in empty conformity, and soulless regimentation. Cornelius Hackl and Barnaby Tucker are apprentices in the store of their mean and domineering employer, Horace Vandergelder, who talks to everyone as if he was paying them: the time is the early 1880's. Mr. Vandergelder refuses Cornelius' request for an evening free in the week, and so when Mr. Vandergelder goes to New York to meet a girl whom he may decide to marry, the meeting having been arranged by the volatile and enterprising Mrs. Levi, the clerks determine to rebel, to do the things they really want to, to have adventures, even to be in danger or get arrested, to really live instead of being stifled in depersonalizing work and boredom.

The first scene of *The Matchmaker* ends with the exhilarating departure of the clerks for New York, exploding tins of tomatoes scattering over the stage, which they have caused as an excuse for closing the store. We next see them in Mrs. Molloy's hat-shop in New York, into which they have hurried on seeing Mr. Vandergelder on the other side of the street. They pretend that money is no object to them, and actually they have only a dollar or so left. Mrs. Molloy is the woman Mr. Vandergelder is considering asking to be his wife, but on finding the clerks hidden in her cupboard he says that he will not see her again. Mrs. Molloy and her assistant then ask the supposedly wealthy clerks to take them to a very expensive restaurant for dinner: and the clerks recklessly agree, although they cannot pay for it. This symbolises that if men will have the courage to be their own masters, to defy bosses and convention and money, they will find themselves free and joyous in a new and truly friendly human world. As Cornelius says, "Isn't the

world full of wonderful things? To think that I never knew there was such happiness cooped up in Yonkers." He's in danger of losing his job, his security, but he doesn't care. "Even if I have to dig ditches for the rest of my life, at least I'll be a ditch-digger who once had a wonderful time." Mrs. Molloy says that she has been respectable for so long, that now they are in disgrace they may as well make the most of it: the fashionable world is the only place they'll be accepted in. Without the courage to rebel against the mean material degradations of capitalism, authority, greed and Mrs. Grundy, we are engrossed in a nauseating gloom, a desolate horror of objectivation and slavery, which is not life.

Mr. Vandergelder and the four friends both arrive at the same restaurant: only the employer does not know they are there, a screen separating them. Mr. Vandergelder's secretary, Malachi Stack is sympathetic to the young people. The aside is an old theatrical device, but in *The Matchmaker* it is very appropriately used to establish a unity between the audience and the characters, so emphasizing wittily the theme of love and co-operation and communion among all men, we should come out of our corners and see something of other people. Are the bourgeoisie and the workers who aspire after bourgeois privileges really true men and women? Mr. Thornton Wilder undoubtedly rejects the ideals of the authoritarian, the puritan and the employer. He shows that they are timorous, like hypocritical hares, a breath of propriety, or custom, a draught of wind or the mere threat of pain or of danger scares them. In an aside Malachi Stack explains to the audience why he is going to give the bulging purse, which is really Mr. Vandergelder's and the real meaning of his religion, morality, domineering, and which Malachi has found on the floor, to Cornelius. "The law does not care whether the owner deserves his property or not." And he also says that if a man has no vices he is in danger of making them out of his "virtues". So-called "honesty" in bourgeois society is

the mask for heartlessness and the vile Roman conception of property. Money comes before everything beautiful and kind and generous. It is for these reasons that we live in an extremely false atmosphere of fear and suspicion in "civilized" society, in which the real inner springs of action are hidden: the rule of money is the cause of this. Money is an impersonal force, anonymous, inhuman and the furthest remove from the basic realities of life. Mr. Vandergelder remarks that as in a letter you have to call everyone "dear" it's enough to make you give up writing it. He has never heard of a broken heart, and no one has ever seen him without his purse. So it is delightful that this scene ends with the poor clerks having his purse and plenty of money to pay for their meal, thanks to the generosity and friendship of Malachi, while Mr. Vandergelder is much embarrassed at being unable to pay for his dinner.

Of course, the scene is actually lively farce, but the profounder implications are never obscured or forgotten. If it is farce at all, it is a kind of *expressionistic* farce. The last scene of the play is in the house of Miss Flora van Huysen, to whom Mr. Vandergelder has sent his niece to prevent her marrying Ambrose Kemper, an artist. "When you're fifty, you'll thank me for this," he says. But Flora van Huysen is really the friend of all young lovers, and when there is confusion as to the identity of Cornelius and Ambrose, each through various complications masquerading as the other, she tells them "you're alive and breathing—the important thing is that you're in love, all the rest is illusion—what does it matter what your names are." And Malachi Stack remarks that although we are always being told of people wanting to break into houses, there are it seems to him more people wanting to break out of them.

While *The Matchmaker* is not Thornton Wilder's most original and theatrically brilliant play (like *The Skin of Our Teeth*) it is perhaps his most warm, libertarian, and human. People see a play like *The Matchmaker*, are amused

and entertained by its humour and wit, but seem to forget or ignore its plea for co-operation and liberty. It is brilliantly produced by Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, and is excellently acted, especially by Ruth Gordon as Mrs. Levi and by Arthur Hill and Alec McOwen as the two clerks, Sam Levene portrays Mr. Vandergelder, a character who illustrates that if throughout your life you abstain from murder, illegal theft, true independence of mind, blasphemy and disrespect towards your parents and the powerful, your Church, State and your King, you are conventionally held to deserve moral admiration even if you have never done a single kind or generous or noble action. It is strange that man has passed through many centuries of civilizing evolution in order to reach the vilest depths of spiritual degradation and monstrous materialism. D.M.M.

The Tragedy of Old Age

Continued from p. 1

for them. The prospect of a few years of leisure fills them with apprehension. During all their lifetime their hours have been regulated by someone else; in their jobs someone has told them what to do, or they have been engaged in a routine so dehumanising that it has dominated even their sleeping hours. Suddenly, after perhaps fifty years of such conditioning they have been released into a strange world of leisure. And to their unpreparedness for this new chapter in their lives, and to the biological difficulties of adapting themselves to it, is added the misery of living on the O.A.P. and having to do without even those few "luxuries" which relieved the boredom of their working days.

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ELSEWHERE in this issue of FREEDOM we publish a review of Bertrand Russell's famous essay "In Praise of Idleness", which is as topical to-day as when it was written some twenty years ago. And the author, now in his eighties, is a living example of the compensations that old age holds for those equipped to take it in their stride!

Society as organised to-day denies to the majority the prospects of a happy, interesting carefree old-age. It is not only that material security is denied to those who have spent a lifetime at work, for it is even possible that a satisfactory solution to this problem could be found within the capitalist system. But the other problem would still remain: of providing the environment for old-age, that is of the comforts and attention without isolation, companionship and love without sacrificing Youth to Age. And this is a problem which as we see it, will and can only be undertaken successfully when Man decides that there is something more to life than work, motor-cars, refrigerators and washing machines. For then we shall have more time for human relationships and more understanding of the problems of the very young . . . and the very old.

THE CULTURE-MONGERS

MR. D. S. SAVAGE in a recent broadcast talk (*The Listener*, 18/11/54) entitled 'Is Our Culture Slowly Dying?' postulates a distinction between the terms 'culture' and 'civilization': he describes them as conceptions that run transversely to each other—they follow the pattern of thought which sees human life in terms of a tension between contrary principles: spirit and nature, freedom and necessity, leisure and work, value and utility. Culture belongs with the first series—spirit, freedom, leisure, and value. Civilization belongs with the second—necessity, work, utility. A fully human life presupposes a harmonious reconciliation between the two . . . On the basis of these definitions he maintains that our culture is becoming divorced from our civilization; that nature, necessity and work have taken precedence over spirit, freedom and leisure to such an extent that fewer and fewer people are concerned with ultimate values. Civilizations are concerned only with finite ends, with technological progress, and in our age particularly, with the accumulation of wealth. This exclusive concern with materiality, D. S. Savage continues 'makes the culture of the past into a museum piece and turns art into a commodity'. He gives as an example of this process the contrast between a literary review of 1908-10, *The English Review* (then edited by Ford Madox Ford) which contained not only the work of such men as Conrad, Hardy, Wells, James, Pound, and Lawrence but also numerous articles on unemployment, the Press, world affairs, etc., with the literary journals of to-day—subsidised, institutionalised magazines, which are able to pay very high rates to their contributors, considerably higher than most similar periodicals of the past. When such journals are freed from financial worries the editors should be able to concentrate on quality to a far greater extent than their predecessors could, but instead there has been a decline in standards; it is also clear that amongst these journals, at the present time, 'there is simply no place for . . . an uninhibited expression of opinion on matters of general concern'.

The leading literary periodicals of to-day are *Encounter* and *The London Magazine*, they lead not only in terms of circulation (*Encounter's* current circulation is 11,500, *The London Magazine's*, 17,500, figures far above others in the same field) but also in maintaining a consistent standard which few of the smaller periodicals can approach. This cannot be solely ascribed to the fact that the larger periodicals can afford to pay much higher rates. They are both edited by men of established reputation (*Encounter* by Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol and *The London Magazine* by John Lehmann, who lately had his own publishing business), men who 'know the ropes' of the literary world: they can obtain

contributions from the better-known authors where the editors of smaller periodicals could not—through personal contact; they have the ability to recognise talent and the knowledge to give helpful advice to the unknown writer (knowledge which lesser editors seldom have as they are often struggling poets or novelists themselves). In fact, they are at the top of their profession. This ability to produce an attractive and saleable literary magazine is undoubted; but how does it affect the overall quality? Is adequate encouragement given to new writers? And most important of all, is there diversity? The best editors are not those who are content to publish the work of one particular group only but those who, like Cyril Connolly with *Horizon* or Desmond MacCarthy with *Life and Letters*, showed a genuine catholicity.

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LET us examine these magazines in more detail. *Encounter*, sub-titled 'Literature, Arts, Politics', is financed by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organisation concerned with combatting the influence of Communism in the cultural field by finding some common ground on which Western writers and artists can take a stand against the monolithic culture of the Party. However, the Congress largely consists of ex-Communists and is financed from American sources, with the result that there is more concern with anti-Communism than with finding those positive ideas round which the intellectuals of the West could rally. Although there is little specific anti-Communist propaganda in the pages of *Encounter*, the general attitude that is common to most of the intellectual ex-Communists (as if to say 'Once is enough. We have tried flirting with a revolutionary idea, using our intellect in her service, but got severely slapped for being too familiar') is much in evidence; an attitude that is not concerned with basic human needs or with fundamental criticisms of our institutions. An instance of this occurs in the first issue where Irving Kristol writes in a report of an assembly organised by the Congress to discuss 'Science and Freedom' . . . as long as one of the world's great empires is obviously intent upon misusing [the power conjured up by scientists], there is nothing left to do but conjure up more power, and still more, in the hopes of frustrating this intention'. Is this cynical acceptance of the necessity for mass suicide an excuse for a lack of concern with what may be termed 'human values'—that search for ways whereby the individual may realise himself more fully?

Some of the non-literary articles are very good: amongst others Geoffrey Gorer on 'English Ideas about Sex' (in No. 3); Leslie A. Fiedler on McCarthy (No. 11); 'My Confession' by Mary McCarthy (No. 5); and 'A Guide to Poli-

tical Neuroses' by Arthur Koestler (No. 2). It is interesting to note that these writers are all well known either in this country or the U.S.A.; none of the articles by 'unknown' authors is comparable. Is there then a dearth of talent? Are the younger generation of writers not of the same standard as those who became established during or before the last war? The reason is that this periodical draws its contributors from the one section only, those who belong to the 'literary world' of London and New York. Too diverse to be called a group, yet they have much in common. They are the forcing beds for our present-day culture; they form organisations concerned with the dissemination, not of culture as an integral part of human activity. But the sort that 'turns art into a commodity'. To a certain extent this is an unfair generalisation; but *Encounter* represents the best literary periodical that can be produced by such people. The result is not a magazine with a life of its own but a collection of articles, poems, and short stories, some of which are very good and some not so good, which happen to be bound within the same cover.

Culture is very much the concern of *The London Magazine*, sub-titled 'a monthly review of literature'. This periodical is subsidised for a period of two years by the *Sunday Pictorial/Daily Mirror* newspaper group. The fantastic paradox of the purveyors of sensationalism and cheesecake financing a literary magazine is at first sight hard to accept. Have the directors, perhaps, had a fit of conscience about the reading-matter they present in their newspapers and felt the need to redress the balance a little? If

so, the result is a magazine that is decidedly safe. It is devoted solely to 'literature' which inevitably restricts its intellectual appeal: an infusion of politics or the social sciences would add immensely to its vitality. The so-called 'new movement', recently acclaimed by the *Spectator* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, is well represented in the first issue with poems by Thom Gunn and celebrations in verse by Elizabeth Jennings, but the majority of contributors are drawn from the same stratum as those of *Encounter*; though perhaps in this case the editorial net is thrown a little wider.

The lack of genuine vitality in either of these magazines certainly tends to support D. S. Savage's contention that the literary journals to-day are a symptom of the fatal disease attacking our culture. The fact that they are subsidised, so that the editor has no financial worries, should be an added reason for encouraging new writers, particularly if they are unfashionable and unorthodox; but in practice the reverse has happened. Is this an example of the corrupting influence of money-power? Financial security is a breeder of orthodoxy, and orthodoxy is a negative attitude. It is regrettably true that both these periodicals are unadventurous, unwilling to take risks, and one must presume that this is because they do not wish to jeopardise their financial position. The cankerous virus of the money-system on which our civilization is based has successfully attacked those who are concerned with 'spirit, freedom, leisure and value'. Culture cannot exist in a vacuum: the tendency to partition off each aspect of human life into separate compartments, each with its own hierarchy of experts, has been deplored by a number of writers; and when applied to culture the effect is fatal. M.G.W.

LETTER

The Conquest of Nature

SOME anarchist propaganda seems to be permeated by a nostalgic longing for the past, a return to a natural life away from this synthetic civilisation. The value of the word natural in this context is mainly emotive. It is a "hurrah" word, synthetic is an "alas" word. So we hear of natural childbirth, natural food, natural environment. But the whole of our universe of space, matter, and energy is natural in opposition to the supernatural worlds described by the religionists.

These writers are really objecting to the development of specialisation while still wanting to retain many of the undoubted advantages that have resulted from this process. But is not specialisation the inevitable corollary of mutual aid? The small bands of food-gatherers wandering in the forest practised mutual

aid to only a limited extent for they could and did satisfy most of their requirements individually. But with the growth of specialisation goes the growth of mutual aid and man's increasing dependence on his fellows for the satisfaction of his needs. A measure of the success of this growth is the great increase that has occurred in man's needs, and the freedom he has gained from his environment.

The problem of myxomatosis which was taken as the theme of the article entitled "The Conquest of Nature" (*FREEDOM*, last week) is one of lack of knowledge concerning its full effect on the balance of nature. The horror it arouses is an irrelevance due to the fact that the rabbits come out into the country lanes to die instead of dying decently out of sight in the gin traps of the undergrowth. The sentimentalists happily eat meat because they take care never to visit a slaughter house.

The poisonous foods and artificial manures mentioned later in the same article are the result of lack of knowledge as to their effect and not a justification for rejecting synthetic products. A modern pure drug in the hands of a pharmacist is more valuable than a crude plant extract in the hands of a tribal medicine man, and the forest food gatherer just died of his disease.

Tablets of ascorbic acid will make the same contribution to health as oranges, and while no one wishes to forbid the eating of oranges, the fact remains that the commonest dietary deficiency in this country is lack of ascorbic acid. Should we try to conquer disease, or learn to live with it? Or is perhaps the use of the phrase "Conquest of Nature" in this context just a quibble with words?

It is not enough to run away from the problems that face man. Only a positive approach will win for us the respect which we consider our ideas deserve. Man's capacity is limited, the conquest of ignorance will only be achieved through specialisation and mutual aid. London. HAROLD H. SCULTHORPE.

gents placed their greatest hopes, proved the most disappointing. Her armies fought several desultory campaigns against Turkey (1806-1812) while her envoys meddled in Serbian internal affairs. In 1812 the Czar left the Serbs to their fate when Napoleon's invasion of Russia forced Alexander I to make peace with Turkey.

LESSONS OF THE INSURRECTION OF 1804

In spite of its ultimate failure, the First Insurrection is a landmark of inspiration to successive generations of Serbs in their efforts to break away from the Turkish and Habsburg empires. The events of 1804 showed them that however overwhelming the odds against them were, they need not despair of success. That was a lesson which stood them in good stead in their tribulations throughout the 19th century and in more recent times, and one which might well be remembered by those who despair of freedom to-day.

Furthermore, the nature and course of the Insurrection support the following contentions:

(a) the peasantry has revolutionary potentialities, a fact largely ignored by Marxists until Lenin made use of it to further the Bolshevik conquest of power.

(b) the absence of a closely-knit organisation need not necessarily prevent the success of a rising, even if the rank and file are culturally backward and the means of production primitive. The Serbian example, like many others, show the very opposite to be the case.

(c) the value of spontaneity and the limitations of revolutionary government. Bearing the latter in mind a major prob-

The First Serbian Insurrection (1804-1813)—2

THE renewal of the struggle between the Serbs and the Turks had a three-fold effect on the course of the First Serbian Insurrection. The dread of a return to Turkish sovereignty with all that it implied, prevented a division into moderates and radicals in the revolutionary camp, a feature which distinguishes the Serbian Insurrection from the French and Russian revolutions. So did the absence of any domestic elements on which foreign, in this case Moslem, armed intervention could rely in the struggle against the insurgents who were all Christians. Lastly, Karageorge's Serbia was like Robespierre's France, an armed camp, the continued existence of which depended on the fortunes of war, the number and organisation of the two opposing sides and the attitude of groups hitherto neutral.

It is therefore understandable that the raising of troops and their equipment, as well as the desire to spread the insurrection into the surrounding provinces were the main preoccupations of the Serbs. The village commune and the *zadrugas* proved as valuable in wartime as they had under Turkish rule, sending a steady flow of men and food, though the latter was rather short at times. The problem of equipping these peasant troops, numbering on occasion sixty thousand men, was however more complicated. Until a few arsenals were established in Serbia itself they depended on what arms they had in their possession at the time of the insurrection and on what they had wrested from the Turkish armies, while an uncertain supply of powder reached them from the Habsburg dominions thanks to smugglers and Serbs living across the border.

The Serbs had in the first days of the revolt few definite objectives beyond mere negative resistance to authority represented by the marauding janissaries. Soon however, the idea of liberating their compatriots in the neighbouring provinces and securing complete independence from Turkey caught fire among the peasants.

They made several attempts to advance towards Macedonia, to cross into Bosnia and link with the Serbs in Montenegro who had won their independence from the Turks at the beginning of the preceding century. Karageorge's army failed however in spite of some initial successes and the efforts made by the Serbs living in those parts. The Turkish grip in Macedonia, the Sandjak, Bosnia and Herzegovina proved sufficiently strong to prevent the re-occurrence of events similar to those of 1804 in Serbia, largely owing to the existence of strong Moslem minorities. The latter, even if they were of Slav or Albanian origin, invariably sided with Constantinople in the defence of their privileges threatened by the insurgents, whom they despised and feared in turn.

The failure of these attempts between 1805 and 1809 did more than just put Karageorge on the defensive. It localised the insurrection—an important step which contributed to its defeat in 1813—to an area inhabited by Serbs only, though not most of them, before the more resolute elements in the other Balkan nations had joined them in their struggle against the Turks. (None the less the insurrection had some effect on the other nationalities, especially the Greeks. Karageorge's renown had so spread throughout the Balkans that the

Greek secret society Philike Hetaireia made use of his services in 1817. It arranged for him to leave his place of exile in Russia to return to Serbia where he was to start another insurrection which it was hoped would be the signal for a general anti-Turkish revolt in South-East Europe.)

The last four years of the First Serbian Insurrection have several features common with all the revolutions which have been only partially successful and have lost their initial impetus. Though the patriarchal society in Serbia lacked a nobility or a fairly strong merchant class such as the Rumanians and Greeks had at the time, it produced in the hour of need a number of skilful generals and diplomats among the illiterate peasants and shepherds. But it could not prevent some of them, once their occupation and social standing had changed, from adopting the very mode of behaviour against which the Serbs had risen and fought. Reports of rebel leaders who took over harems from the Moslems they captured, who enriched themselves on the booty taken and who tried to create private armies and fiefs, made melancholy reading and explain the severe measures which Karageorge took.

With the decline of revolutionary élan came the increasing reliance on aid from abroad which it was thought could alone redress the vast disproportion between Serbian resources and the might of the Turkish empire. Though eagerly sought, little practical help came from the Great Powers immersed in the struggle with France, Austria even closed her frontier with Serbia and Napoleon urged the Sultan to crush his rebellious subjects. Russia, on whom the insur-

