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Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"The treason of the ministers against the liberties of the people is infinitely worse than the rebellion of the people against the ministers."

—HENRY GRATTAN.

Vol. 19, No. 17

April 26th, 1958.

Threepence

TRANSPORT CRISIS?

AS we go to Press, the workers in two major industries in this country are preparing for a full-scale official strike for more wages. The railwaymen are ready to call a strike throughout the whole country, and in London all its bus workers are making plans for stopping their service. Whether the London Underground will also be affected is not yet clear, since these workers have a separate agreement with London Transport which has so far kept them out of bus stoppages, and of rail disputes, although they are members of the National Union of Railwaymen.

In the case of the railwaymen, their claim for an increased wage has been turned down flat. "The industry cannot afford it", says Sir Brian Robertson, British Transport chief. Any increase would have to be passed on to the travellers or freight-charge payers, or to be met from a State subsidy. All very unpopular measures and not in accord with the government's anti-inflationary policies.

So the railwaymen have to continue existing on inadequate incomes so that the national economy may be made healthy again.

The busmen have already been granted an increase but are nowhere near satisfied with it. They asked for a 25s. a week raise for all London Transport drivers and conductors, but the Board granted only 10s. 6d. for central London workers only. For those on the country routes—nothing.

The same excuse was put forward: that the industry cannot afford all-round increases, and presumably the Board hoped to split the busmen by its decision and leave the country workers without the support of the central men. The central workers,

however, have seen through that one. Apart from their dissatisfaction with the 10s. 6d. offer—less than half their demand—it is clear that had they accepted it and left the country workers where they are, the low wages of the latter could have been used as a measure for the Central London workers in future wage claims. An injury to one is an injury to all.

When the decisions to strike were announced, certain Conservative journalists, particularly Randolph Churchill, the man with nothing to sell but a gift for self-advertisement, saw in the coincidence of a rail and bus strike a possibility of a general strike, and saw in that an opportunity for a 'crisis' election with the Tories hopeful of winning on a wave of anti-working class fear and resentment among the middle classes inconvenienced by the strike.

It was a wonderful gambit, but for two factors. One, nobody in their senses could imagine the present TUC or the Labour Party having anything whatsoever to do with a general strike. The busmen and the railwaymen will be driven into the ground before the leaders of the Labour Movement considered such a disturbance of the *status quo*. Two, the Tories' Central Office, which is a bit more realistic about their chances in an election than Mr. Churchill, Jr., knows fully well that if their policies lead to widespread industrial disputes the electorate, already showing at by-election after by-election that the honeymoon is over, will put the blame fairly and squarely at the foot of the Government. After all it is generally conceded that governments

are chosen to run the country, and if they show themselves incapable of so doing they can be thrown out.

The present situation certainly puts the Tories on the spot. If they back up the Transport Executive in refusing relief for the underpaid transport workers, strikes will certainly ensue with unknown repercussions. If on the other hand they instruct the Executives to yield to the unions' pressure, they are opening the door to further claims throughout industry which will upset their anti-inflationary plans. Yet if they sit back and do nothing everyone will blame them.

Nevertheless, we feel sure that some compromise will be reached. It always is. And we also feel sure that whatever the compromise is, it will result in very short-lived gains for the transport workers. They always are.

We sympathise strongly with the workers involved in the present disputes, and see no reason whatsoever why they should be penalised in order to provide a disinflationary tendency for the Government. A living wage is the minimum requirement for all, but it is the continual demonstration of capitalism's inability to provide this that has led us to question it, and through that to question the whole system of wages and money.

It seems such a pity that the organised strength of the workers is used for such ephemeral purposes—with nothing in the future but continued struggle. Where are the workers with eyes to see the necessity for ending this stupidity altogether?

After the Elections in - SOUTH AFRICA

THE general election in South Africa is over, marking a victory for the Nationalists who have gained more seats and more votes. This increase is indicative of the fear of white South Africa that the black man will be allowed even a pitiful amount of freedom.

Doubtless many people deserted the United Party believing the propaganda of the Nationalists who tried to identify them with the African Congress in spite of the United Party's own statement that it will never stand for equality of black and white. In fact, as pointed out by the *Observer* correspondent, Cyril Dunn, the United Party "have tried hopelessly, to seem more Africans than the Nationalists".

He also reports that the failure of the proposed mass strike of Africans which we discussed in last week's *FREEDOM* was partly due to the United Party, and to white employers. The United Party wanted to prove to the electorate that it was opposed to the strike, and in addition it was convinced that if mass African action took place the Nationalists would forcibly crush it thus getting the credit of keeping the blacks in their place and thereby increasing the white vote.

An African journalist speaking on

the BBC last Thursday said that although the mass strike had not been successfully carried out it had shown the African the potential strength of organised mass economic action. We hope so.

In the meantime with the Nationalists holding 103 seats out of 156 (53 to the United Party) the party "will now press ahead with *apartheid*".

S. Rhodesia

In Southern Rhodesia, that outpost of old-style British Imperialism, another blow has been struck for white supremacy in the recent by-election won by the Dominion Party.

When Garfield Todd, ex-Premier and leader of the United Federal Party, was forced to resign because of his liberal policies he was replaced by a "moderate", Sir Edgar Whitehead who, although given the Premiership, was not an M.P. His hopes for becoming one were lost after the result of last week's by-election which means that since no premier can hold office without a seat for more than two months he will either have to call a general election or give up the job.

In these two Southern Rhodesian Parties there is a parallel to the Nationalist and United Parties in South Africa. Neither of them are anxious to concede freedom to the Africans, and policies, without ethical considerations, are aimed at political and economic control. The United Federal Party would like to keep a foot in both camps or at least they do not want to antagonise that small section of the African population which might support them.

But the fate of Garfield Todd indicates that any "freedom" which the leaders of the United Party think it is necessary to concede to the Africans should be dished out in small suitable doses by them.

As in all cases where racialism plays a part in social and political life there is a strong economic motive. But there is also the element of irrationality which will not be changed by political legislation. Only, we hope, by time.

Back to the Mailbags

The recession is being felt even in prisons. In New York State about 1,200 inmates otherwise eligible for parole are being kept behind bars because a prisoner must satisfy the parole board that he has employment and there are no jobs going.

Daily Telegraph 5/4/58.

The Chancellor should have talked less about Port and more about The £1,400 millions Arms Programme

IN explaining to the House why he proposed to reduce the duty on Port at a cost to the Exchequer of £6 millions in a full year, the Chancellor in his Budget statement last week went into great detail about pre-war and post-war consumption of light and heavy wines, drinking fashions and tastes as well as trends. But the fact that the government was proposing to spend £1,418 millions on Defence was not even mentioned! All he said was that he estimated that there would be "a reduction of £12 millions in defence expenditure. The latter Estimate assumes the receipt of £47 millions from Germany towards the cost of our forces in Germany". Which means that Defence expenditure will possibly be £35 millions higher this year than last; a mere bagatelle, hardly worth an explanation in a £5,000 millions Budget. But one would have thought that the expenditure of the £1,400 millions deserved at least as detailed an explanation as was given for the £6 millions Duty concession to Port tipplers. Or is it that Defence is a fixed charge in the Balance Sheet like Tax Collection, or a hardy perennial like the National Debt?

Unlike consumer production which is at the mercy of internal demand, and world market prices, Defence has no limits, no competitors, no fear of overproduction. It thrives on obsolescence; indeed scientists are given every incentive

to evolve new weapons of destruction, so that as fast as the weapons are turned out industry is busy re-tooling to produce even better ones to replace them. The war industry and the armed services are without a doubt the only aspect of our Economy which has enjoyed uninterrupted boom conditions since 1939. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement makes it clear that in his opinion, an inflationary trend still exists (incidentally some people cannot understand why, in the circumstances, he should have "released", by his Tax concessions, more than £100 millions for spending. Yet he does not consider that £1,400 millions spent in keeping able-bodied men polishing uniforms and playing at soldiers as well as in importing vast quantities of raw material (much of it paid for with those "valuable dollars") and mobilising factories and skill, all to no purpose so far as home production or exports are concerned, is a contributory factor to that inflationary trend.

It is not our intention to discuss for or against the Defence expenditure with Economic theories. But is it not time that the public, who pay for it should, if only at Budget time, seek to understand why £1,400 millions of the £5,000 millions collected each year by the government from the public's pocket are absorbed in this way?

WHILST it is true that the Government has decided, against the wishes of some vested interests—including workers—to close a number of naval yards and armament factories as redundant in the H-bomb age, the fact that war expenditure shows no signs of decreasing, and that H-bomb production expensive as it is only accounts for a relatively small portion of the £1,400 millions, makes it abundantly clear that "conventional" weapons and personnel still represent the major part of the Defence programme. How can the government argue in favour of this expenditure when already in 1955, in the Defence White Paper, they recognised their inability to match Russia's "conventional" forces, a consideration which led them to declare, in paragraph 19 of that document, that "the knowledge that aggression will be met by overwhelming nuclear retaliation is the surest guarantee that it will not take place" (our italics).

If the West relies on "nuclear retaliation" as a deterrent to "conventional" aggression there would appear to be no military reasons for maintaining or equipping conventional armies in Europe, Africa or Asia at all. The argument that local conflicts would automatically become large-scale wars of annihilation if America and Britain dispensed with conventional weapons, auto-

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120,000 at Hamburg Rally

Against Nuclear Arms for Germany

BONN, APRIL 17.

Some 120,000 people gathered in the Hamburg Town Hall Square and blocked streets leading to it during the biggest demonstration against nuclear arms yet staged in Western Germany. For over three-quarters of an hour all municipal transport was stopped—this on the order of the Transport and Municipal Workers' Union.

Workers trooped in orderly procession to the Town Hall to listen to orations by trade union and the Social Democratic party spokesmen on the dangers of nuclear warfare and of subordinating diplomacy to the exigencies of military alliances.

The demonstration began at five o'clock and the streets became packed with people leaving their work. There were comparatively few young people among them. Some of the demonstrators carried placards with "People of Hamburg, remember 1943" (the year of the worst Allied bombing attack on the city) and "Instead of bases for rockets, bases for negotiations."

Speakers appealed for the holding of a national referendum to decide whether the West German armed forces should have nuclear weapons, and there were groans when references were made to the Government view that a referendum was illegal. This view was set out in a letter which the Government sent yesterday to the Prime Minister of Land Baden-Württemberg.

Thanks!

PROGRESS OF A DEFICIT! WEEK 16

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Total ... 26 0 8
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1958 TOTAL TO DATE ... £254 11 8

*Indicates regular contributor.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CHARTISTS

*THE CHARTIST CHALLENGE by
A. R. Schoyen. Heinemann, 25s.

ONE of the minor consequences of British Labour's incorporation in the Establishment has been to make the study of Labour organisation and history a 'respectable' pursuit for academics. Until recent years, apart from a few notable exceptions like the Webbs and G. D. H. Cole, scholars tended to leave this field to be ploughed by semi- or open propagandists who, between them, have produced a crop of very uneven quality. Now that 'Labour's Path to Power' is no longer questioned, the dons are busy muscling in on what looks like being fertile territory. Dr. Schoyen's excellent book* is the latest example of the new trend. It parades unostentatiously all the usual apparatus of scholarship and is based on a thorough examination of sources, including Home Office papers, while being, at the same time, a highly readable piece of writing. The book has been publicised as a new interpretation for the present generation of the Chartist Movement. It is perhaps rather less than that, since it is in fact, as its sub-title indicates, a 'portrait' of one of the Movement's leaders, George Julian Harney. The lack of personal material on Harney has necessitated Dr. Schoyen writing a 'life and times' which is more 'times' than 'life'; but inevitably the result does not add up to a rounded account of the Movement as such.

One object which may have guided Dr. Schoyen in his choice of Harney as a subject seems to have been the desire to explore more fully than has been done hitherto the origins of British social democracy. For this purpose a study of the more notable leader, Feargus O'Connor, who still lacks a biographer, would have been

clearly inappropriate. O'Connor represented not the socialist but the radical Tory elements in Chartism—the elements who were in hostile reaction to the new industrialism and who dreamed of re-creating an agrarian, peasant economy. It was these elements who in their thousands contributed hard won pence to finance the disastrous Chartist Land Plan which had as its object the settling of subscribers on private estates to be cultivated by that favourite horticultural bee-in-the-bonnet of 19th century reformers—'spade-husbandry'. If O'Connor was unsuitable on this score as a peg on which to hang a new interpretation of Chartism, the best choice would have been Bronterre O'Brien, 'the Chartist schoolmaster', the only theoretician of note the Movement produced. O'Brien, if anyone, has the best-founded claim to be the pioneer of British social democracy—a term which, in fact, he appears to have been the first to coin. It was O'Brien who in 1850 attempted to rally the dying forces of Chartism behind the first avowed programme of 'State Socialism'—a programme which reads like a draft of the I.L.P. policy more than a generation later. But O'Brien's contribution has already been assessed in Alfred Plummer's study written before the present academic vogue and still unpublished.

AS a second best choice for Dr. Schoyen's purpose Julian Harney does very well. From this book he emerges (in the quoted words of the late Mat Kavanagh who visited him shortly before his death in 1897) as "a much bigger man than is generally recognised". Clearly, the previous neglect of Harney is largely accounted for by the selective bias of historians. To the Fabian-minded, Harney, flaunting the tricolour and consciously posing as a latter-day Jean Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, cuts a sorry figure. Almost from the outset, the Chartists divided into two wings: the moderate 'moral force' men like William Lovett who drafted the original Charter of political reform and who pinned their hopes on achieving it by constitutional means through an alliance with the middle class Radicals; and the extremists, led by Feargus O'Connor, who cried "peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must".

The latter group, which rapidly gained ascendancy in the leadership, addressed its appeal to those with "unshorn chins, blistered hands, and fustian jackets"—the unemployed, not the skilled working class elite—and it suspected, not without reason, that the middle class sympathisers merely wanted to use the Movement to complete the bourgeois 'revolution' of 1832, at which point progress would be halted. Harney began and ended his Chartist career as a 'physical force' man. More uncompromisingly than anyone, he encouraged and propagated such forthright slogans as: "To live free or die!" and "He that hath no sword, let him sell his shirt and buy one!" And after the fiasco of April 10th, 1848, when the mass meeting on Kennington Common degenerated into a polite lobbying of Parliament and the Movement met its Waterloo, he was still insisting that "From the ranks of the Proletarians must come the saviours of industry." No, clearly; Lovett, not Harney, is the man to cast as the tragic hero in the Fabian drama.

From this it might be thought that Harney would be a candidate for inclusion in the Marxist gallery of prototype Communists, alongside Comrade Bill Morris and Co. In favour of this candidature Harney has several points besides his 'revolutionism' and his resolute class-consciousness. He was, for instance, a convinced internationalist, leader of the Fraternal Democrats, one of the first to appreciate that the struggle in England was only part of a world-wide struggle for human freedom. Moreover, it was in his *Red Republican* of 9th November, 1850, that the first English translation of *The Communist Manifesto* was published. But, no: fortunately or unfortunately, Harney blotted his Marxist copy-book. He was too unsophisticated an internationalist to appreciate the unwisdom of espousing refugee groups and movements not endorsed by Marx, i.e. all save the then insignificant Marxist sect. His friendship with Engels languished; Ernest Jones replaced him as the white-eyed boy of the twin priests of 'scientific socialism'; and before long Harney was dismissed as an 'apostate' and shrugged off as the vain and petty 'Citizen Hip! Hip! Hurrah!'

So Harney has been left to be classified as a social democrat. Not exactly the sort of person who today might expect to be favoured with an invitation to Mr. Gaitskill's sherry parties but someone who might fit not too uneasily into the *Tribune* clique; or, better still—for the Jacobin strand in his thinking was very marked—into Blum's pre-war French Socialist Party. No one, I think, will wish to dispute Dr. Schoyen's classification, although

the evidence he produces is rather thin—Harney was a brilliant journalist but no great shakes as a theoretician.

As a social democrat, Harney expressed all the 'correct' opinions. Chartism itself, with its advocacy of the famous Six Points of universal suffrage, payment of M.P.s, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s, annual Parliaments, and secret balloting, derives its historical significance from the fact that it was the first mass working class political movement. It began with the idea of realising Tom Paine's vision of the just commonwealth: the underlying assumption was that the ills of society could be righted if only the appropriate political institutions were introduced. It rapidly became more than a purely political movement and was seen by both its adherents and opponents as "a bread and butter question". It never succeeded, however, in defining at all precisely the positive social and economic content of its programme: it was a transition movement, torn between 'reaction' and 'progress'. Nevertheless, throughout it remained true to its basic axiom: that the conquest of political power was the essential pre-requisite of labour emancipation. Harney himself expressed this point well when he said: "For the working class there is but one way of righting their wrongs, that of obtaining mastery of the state."

Although Chartism was the first proletarian political movement, it was not the first proletarian movement. It had been preceded by the Owenite co-operative socialist and syndicalist movements—both of which insisted, in their different ways, on direct economic and industrial action. The Chartists, therefore, found themselves frequently at odds with those who argued for

the primacy of trade union or co-operative action and were sceptical of the benefits to be derived from political reform. They had to assert, as Harney did, that "Trades organisations may mitigate but they cannot uproot existing evils." At the local level the fundamental conflict of principles was not so apparent: Chartists formed their own co-operatives to practise 'exclusive dealing' as a means of hitting at the 'shpopocracy', and there were sporadic attempts inside the trade unions to use the general strike or 'National Holiday' as a means of enforcing the provisions of the Charter. But the conflict remained a fundamental one and goes far to explain the failure of these local efforts.

FROM the vantage point of 1958 it may look as though the Chartists were right in insisting on the prior conquest of political power. Certainly, the Labour Movement has subsequently accepted the Chartist axiom—so much so that any Labour M.P. can raise a cheap cheer by denouncing the insidious danger of using industrial action to achieve political ends. But 1958 is not the only point from which to interpret history. The end is not yet and one may doubt whether the emancipation of what the Chartists were fond of calling 'the industrious classes' has even begun.

One of the most interesting sections of Dr. Schoyen's book is his account of Harney's post-Chartist career. He remained a radical, although a somewhat disillusioned one. His disillusionment began in the months that passed after the February Revolution of 1848 in France. The course of events there came as a painful revelation to him for, as Dr. Schoyen points out, "the first effect of universal suffrage had not been a programme of social and

Continued on p. 4

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Liberation, March 1958 1/9

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- Will the customer who ordered Howard Fast's "The God who walked by" please get in touch with us. His book has arrived but we have mislaid his address.
- "Babel in Spain" was wrongly advertised last week as being written by Gerald Brenan. The author is in fact John Haycraft.

The Motor Age - 6. Solutions

Continued from p. 3

6. Road Improvements.

The radical solution of problems of traffic control is to make it unnecessary. From the crossroads where the volume of traffic is so slight that it can safely be self-regulating, the next stage is the one controlled by a patrolman or policeman, next, one controlled by automatic signals, and the final stage is the elimination of control by introducing roundabouts, flyovers, or cloverleaf crossings, where once again the flow of traffic is self-regulating.

The provision of motor roads is an obvious necessity in the motor age, and it is typical of the governmental approach that in this country motorists should have been taxed for half a century for this express purpose, without the purpose having been attained. (See the second articles in this series). As Mr. Buchanan says: "There is no particular technical difficulty in coping with through-traffic; it is straightforward road building on principles which are well-known and have been tested out elsewhere in the world. The problems arising at the present time are mainly financial and political". But it is also true as we have seen that congestion and accidents are mainly connected with urban traffic, not affected by long-distance expressways, and that, as American experience shows measures taken to assist urban traffic flow only aggravate congestion.

7. Restriction of Access.

To claim 'motorless zones' as a solution to urban traffic problems sounds at first like claiming a cure when you have killed the patient, but I think that the projects described in the 3rd and 4th articles in this series show that properly arranged motorless zones are in fact a solution which benefits everybody. It is also a libertarian solution. People who go to Venice speak of the immense freedom they feel at being in a city free of cars. The physical separation of different types of traffic (which is in fact what

motorless zoning amounts to) is both radical and libertarian. Radical because it gets to the root of the trouble, and libertarian because it ensures the minimum of restriction on either kind of road user and makes law-enforcement unnecessary. No-one regards the preclusion of pedestrian access to railway tracks as an infringement of anybody's freedom, and it is a prerequisite of railway operation that the trains keep to the track. The same kind of assumption can be made of motor traffic which is far more dangerous.

This kind of solution, by its very radical nature, may have a limited application, but we don't really know what its limits are because we have barely tried it at all.

8. Education.

The reduction in accident figures following various propaganda campaigns for road safety shows that undoubtedly this kind of campaigning is worth while. This is particularly noticeable in the case of children. The pamphlet *Sense and Safety* points out that

"Since systematic road safety education began in Great Britain, there has been relatively speaking a sharp reduction in child casualties. For example, the number of schoolchildren killed in 1938 was 792, whereas in 1954, when the number of schoolchildren in the country had gone up by about 8 per cent. it had dropped to 510. The number of children killed per 100,000 vehicles on the road has dropped by two-thirds in the last twenty years. These are striking figures, and the improvement is mainly due to education. This is so because the reduction in casualties has occurred almost entirely among children of school age, namely the over fives. The casualty rate among younger children, who as a rule do not receive systematic instruction, has not improved."

On the other hand, as Mary Burt writes (*Manchester Guardian* 21/10/57), "There are some things which no amount of education will teach a child and 100 per cent. preoccupation with his own safety is one of them. Even if adult behaviour on the road were always beyond reproach there would still be accidents to children simply by reason of their immaturity. But by forcing them into daily contact with fast traffic we are pitting their undeveloped powers of concentration and judgment not only against the counter influences of their own

nature, but also against the weaknesses and errors of grown-ups wielding highly dangerous weapons". We are failing in our duties to them, she asserts, if we do not ensure that they "can go about their business in safety, not by vainly trying to educate them into being prematurely adult, but by segregating them from the danger and allowing them to develop freely without the crippling responsibility of having first and foremost to keep themselves alive". In other words if we are really seeking solutions instead of palliatives, we will find them in restriction of access.

FROM the evidence that we can gather, it is scarcely possible to claim that the solutions imposed by governmental society are ineffective—we may be thankful, apart from theoretical considerations, for the existence of some of them. The objection to authoritarian solutions may indeed be on the grounds that they are not effective enough. That this is not due to lack of law enforcement can be seen from the fact that motorists constitute over 48 per cent. of all those convicted of any criminal charge in any court in this country, while thieves for instance, are a mere 9.3 per cent. and burglars 2.2 per cent. One reaction to this is to demand heavier penalties and more police activity, and it cannot be denied from the evidence that this too would be effective to an extent.

The more positive reaction is certainly that which demands a change in social attitudes and values, but this in itself is a pious hope unless accompanied by the realisation that if we are really going to build our lives around the motor vehicle, we must solve its problems at the source by decentralisation, by traffic segregation and by motorless zones. It sounds paradoxical to offer physical restriction as a liberating measure, but it has the advantage of impinging on nobody's real freedom, since obviously vehicles can only go where the road leads them, and for the same reason it cuts out the need for any machinery of enforcement. It wipes out the gravest aspect of the problem in a way which is both radical and permanent, it is not a remedy that will be made useless by the increase in the volume of traffic, it makes towns inhabitable again. Above all, it makes it possible for us to keep the immense advantages that the motor vehicle offers, advantages which it is itself steadily destroying.

C.W.

Freedom Needs
More Readers

THE MOTOR AGE - 6. SOLUTIONS

(Continued from our last issue)

1. Restriction on Numbers of Cars.

This has always existed in the form of rationing by price. Private motoring began as a pastime of the rich, became a middle-class activity, and, as incomes rise is ever more widely diffused. The very high purchase tax on new cars, licence fees, the tax on petrol, the restrictions on the hire purchase trade, obviously restrict the number of potential motorists. It is said that there is a submerged demand for some two million cars on hire purchase terms in Britain to-day. It is not easy to visualise any open government policy of limiting the number of cars (if only because powerful economic interests are involved and because more and more voters are motorists) other than by petrol rationing in 'emergencies', by higher taxation and by getting old cars off the roads. It may be that congestion itself will drive more and more people to the conclusion that private motoring is no longer worth the effort, or that once saturation point is reached and cars lose their prestige value, motoring will cease to be fashionable.

But the most obvious libertarian solution is *dispersal* in both time and space—decentralisation of places of work and of times of going to work and coming home. Cars flock into towns at the same times and they flock to the same places at the same times on public holidays—fine Bank Holidays are always the worst day for accidents. If we could adopt less sheep-like habits we could stop all the cars from being in the same place at the same time.

2. Tests on Vehicles.

For the "private", optional and contractual" alternatives to the government's proposals under the Road Traffic Act see A. Prunier's letter in *FREEDOM*, April 7-14, 1956. The arguments for testing, under whatever auspices, are very strong indeed. Norman MacKenzie in the *New Statesman* writes:

"We have elaborate laws, and a system of inspection to enforce safety in

our factories and on our railways, but we permit six million offensive weapons to career about our inadequate and congested roads without any effective control, requiring only that the driver carries insurance cover to compensate for the damage he may do . . . A great many accidents might not have happened if all cars were required to pass certain simple tests. The evidence from the American States where inspection is compulsory certainly supports this view".

Of ten-year-old cars tested voluntarily at Hendon 40 per cent. had faulty brakes, 50 per cent. defective steering and 75 per cent. had poor or wrongly aimed headlights. Of cars between one and five years old, one in five had bad brakes and one in three defective steering. "Only on the very newest models does fault-finding fall to about 10 per cent."

3. Restrictions on the Number of Drivers.

These take the form of the age limit and the driving test. No one may drive a car below the age of 17 or a motor cycle below the age of 16. One of the features of accident statistics is the very high death rate among teenage motor cyclists. (One motor cyclist out of every twenty-three was injured in 1956). There is much discussion at present about grading the age limit with the power of the engine. The only libertarian alternative one can think of is in popularising motor-scooters.

The failure rate in driving tests is 40 per cent. So many accidents are caused by driving errors that one may wonder "whether the standard of driving ability at present accepted for a licence is sufficiently high for to-day's traffic conditions". The failure rate in tests is 40 per cent. Last autumn the Chief Constable of Salford invited motorists to volunteer for a driving test by a police driving instructor. "If the results are any guide to general competence" comments the *Manchester Guardian* "well over half the drivers now on the road (excluding L-drivers) would be classified by the police as poor. If anything the 500 volunteers who undertook the Salford test were better than average, for

at least they were sufficiently interested in driving to come forward for a test."

An article in *The Lancet* 27/9/57 on "skill-fatigue" amongst drivers produces an uncomfortable fact: "Knowing the rules of safe driving is no guarantee—the accident-repeaters knew them better than the accident-free". Some people are known to be accident-prone in that they have a poor co-ordination of eye and muscles, some are known to be 'accident-potential' in that emotion can make them careless. The libertarian solution is for people who are bad drivers to refrain from driving. How revolutionary this truism is, you can see by reflecting: Has anyone ever admitted to you that he is a bad driver?

4. Speed Limits.

It is customary to jeer at them and point to their unenforceability and widespread disregard, but the dramatic fall in road deaths after the introduction of the 30 m.p.h. urban speed limit in 1934, and the similar fall in Germany last year when a similar limit was imposed (20 per cent. fall in accidents, 30 per cent. in deaths) indicate that they are more effective than we think. On three roads in Lancashire last year the introduction of radar speed checks by the police resulted in a fall in accident figures by 60 per cent. on those roads, reducing the figures for the county as a whole by just over 12 per cent. It is therefore believed that "the introduction of radar has achieved its objective of reducing the number of accidents and the number of prosecutions."

Thus we cannot claim that speed limits are either ineffective or unenforceable and the only libertarian solution we can find lies in changing attitudes towards the idea of speed. A police officer declared at a road safety conference last year that we are all so "besotted with the craze for speed" that it was increasingly rare to find ordinary drivers willing to admit that speed could be anything but a virtue. Everyone who had given any thought to the problem knew that the one constant factor which meant the difference between minor mishap and serious injury was speed. Drivers, he said, were constantly urged to higher speed by advertisement, by concealed 'puffing' in the press and on the radio, and by motoring correspondents in the press and magazines.

"For every pound spent on advocating road safety, there must be thousands of pounds spent on advocating speed and recklessness. One effect was an entirely new morality towards speed offences. Most drivers were convinced that they had no moral obligation to observe the law, and that there was nothing anti-social in driving a vehicle, weighing perhaps several tons within inches of a small child, a cyclist, or a pedestrian. The person who would not dream of taking chances with a machine in his own factory or with his own family would calmly drive at high speed under circumstances that literally brought other people to within an inch of death. To those who so often have the task of extricating bodies from underneath heavy vehicles this inhuman indifference to the facts is beyond understanding."

5. Traffic Control.

One of the standard objections to anarchism is that which asks: How can

traffic be regulated anarchistically? Many years ago George Barrett answered this kind of question by pointing out that:

"Such rules in fact which at present exist have been established by custom and not by law, though the law may sometimes take it on itself to enforce them. This question we see very practically answered to-day by the great motor clubs, which are entered voluntarily and which study the interests of this portion of the traffic. At dangerous and busy corners a sentry is stationed who with a wave of the hand signals if the coast is clear, or if it is necessary to go slowly. First-aid boxes and repair shops are established all along the road, and arrangements are made for conveying home motorists whose cars are broken down . . . Suppose now the influence of government were withdrawn from our drivers. Does anyone believe that the result would be chaos? Is it not infinitely more likely that the free agreements at present existing would extend to cover the whole necessary field? And those few useful duties now undertaken by the Government in the matter: would they not be much more effectively carried out by free organisation among the drivers?"

He was writing when the number of motor vehicles in this country was a twentieth of the present number. To his question "Does anybody believe that the result would be chaos?", most people to-day would answer Yes. Nevertheless the basis of Barrett's contention remains and must be the basis of any anarchist attitude to the problems of the motor age. The rules of the road are a matter of mutually convenient custom and not of law. Even the modern Highway Code has not technically the force of law behind it. People do not obey the directions of someone controlling traffic for fear of the law, but out of commonsense. No one regards the flight-controller of an aerodrome, or a railway signalman as part of the coercive machinery of the State.*

Continued on p. 2

*Though an American study "The Psychiatric Findings in the Cases of 500 Traffic Offenders and Accident-Prone Drivers" says that among those diagnosed as neurotic, "In the majority of cases the police were symbols of a hated father. There was a tendency for the policeman to be rejected if there was complex material in which the super-ego seemed to be extremely well developed." (L. S. Selling in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1940).

At the Crossroads

As a young man of twenty-three, not lazy, and no more a sinner than the next fellow, I am so tired of this mad world of destruction that I would like to go into complete seclusion. To Hell with the State, forms, passports, visas, politics, honesty, loyalty and faiths which are no longer real. I tried a monastery—but found I could not pretend I was in love with God.—G. T., London, W.

Letter in *Daily Mirror*, 6/4/58.

A New Aristocracy?

NEW YORK, APRIL 9.

The New York Sanitation Commission has asked its engineers to design public conveniences for dogs—"canine comfort station," it calls them—to be placed at strategic spots in the city. New York has 300,000 dogs.—British United Press.

Manchester Guardian.

to be, then, far from seeking ways of "easing tensions" through Summit talks, or of finding a *modus vivendi* they should strain every nerve to rid the world of the forces of darkness! But instead what do we find? At the Annual Conference in Geneva of the United Nations Commission for Europe, Russia, according to a *New York Times* report (13/4/58)

suggested that a conference of trade ministers be held to promote trade on a long-range basis and to remove "artificial trade barriers," presumably the U.S. embargo. Though similar to earlier Soviet proposals, this one sounded an ironic new note: more trade, Moscow suggested, would help the U.S. combat its economic recession. "We deeply sympathize with the victims of this scourge [of unemployment]," the Soviet delegate, Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksei V. Zakharov, said.

The Soviets indicated that they would offer raw materials if the U.S. would send technicians to Russia to help set up manufacturing plants. Mr. Zakharov said, "We can provide these things for ourselves, but it will take us longer. . . . What we want is an exchange of experience and materials on a commercial basis."

Whilst one can discount the sincerity of Russian "sympathy" equally should one be suspicious of the intransigence of America in regard to opening up trade with Russia. American fears are revealed in this comment by the *N.Y. Times*:

Russia has been carrying on a steadily mounting economic offensive as part of the aggressive and flexible policies that have characterized Nikita Khrushchev's rule. The Russians' attractive trade offers to capital-hungry underdeveloped areas have helped spread Soviet influence throughout Asia and Africa. Moscow's efforts to achieve increased trade with Western industrial nations appear to have the two-fold aim of carrying out Khrushchev's vast promises of better living standards for the Russian people and piercing the U.S. embargo on strategic shipments to the Soviet bloc.

Britain on the other hand apparently is prepared to accept Russia as a competitor in word markets and in the power struggle because she sees in Russia and the Soviet bloc

a large market for her industrial production. And to date, from the point of view of markets and penetration, America represent a greater menace to Britain's chances than Russia!

Only last week at the annual meeting of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce in London, Sir Greville Maginness, president, told members that the volume of Anglo-Russian trade was increasing and that during the past five years exports to Russia had increased more than *ten times*. He criticised some of the restrictions on exports and told members that he had told the President of the Board of Trade that

the British members of the chamber consider that the time is now opportune for the complete abolition of the embargo list, leaving the export of munitions and other warlike goods to be embargoed by the existing licensing procedure.

In his vice-presidential address, Mr. V. I. Smirnov, deplored the "artificial" restrictions to trade between the two countries. The exchange of goods between Britain and the Russian bloc in 1957 was only £212 millions which, he said, was less than the trade with Ireland. Somehow we imagine the President of the Board of Trade will do something about lifting these "artificial restrictions" especially if world markets become a little anaemic in the near future.

★

WE return to our original question Why £1,400 millions a year on "Defence"? Defence against Russia? If so then we must say Britain behaves most curiously to her potential aggressor and no less curiously to her potential protector on the other side of the Atlantic!

Might it be as we have been saying for such a long time that the Defence expenditure has nothing to do with a threat of aggression but a great deal with the problems of capitalism, business and high-finance?

The £1,400 Millions Arms Programme

Continued from p. 1

matically destroys the force of the 'nuclear retaliation' argument. Local conflicts remain "localised" only because it is not in the political or financial interests of either Russia or the USA that they should be the excuse for a world-wide conflict. If, on the other hand, "nuclear retaliation" were the deterrent the British government alleges it to be, then why should Russia continue to maintain huge conventional forces which, by all accounts, it can ill-afford?

It seems clear to us that the retention of conventional armies by the Big Powers is for purposes of aggression or the maintenance of the *status quo* (and in support of this point of view we would cite the cases of Algeria and Kenya, Cyprus, Hungary and Korea) and not Defence, unless one includes a war economy which is essential to the stability of the capitalist economy.

Russia has no more intention of occupying the United States than the latter has of occupying Russia. Not for moral scruples on either side, but because it is a physical impossibility. Surely there is evidence enough in the world to-day to indicate that even overwhelming military superiority is no guarantee that one nation can occupy another for more than a very limited period. To use the case of Russia's satellites as an argument against our thesis is to overlook the fact that Russia maintains her grip in those countries only because in the first place there was a strong current of political opinion sympathetic to the Russian régime, and not by reason of the physical occupation of that country by a Russian administration. Such an argument also overlooks the case of Yugoslavia.

In the "democratic" world the passive resistance in India which made the position of the British Raj there untenable is matched by the terrorism in Palestine and in Cyprus and Kenya. It is significant to mention the case of Kenya that in spite of the British government's attempt to subjugate the Kikuyu by military means, concentration camps, intimidation and by proscribing their organisations, they are as far from "pacifying" that country as they were when the campaign started. New organisations have sprung up, and already "natives" are again being arrested by the hundred. In Algeria the French are using a modern army of more than 300,000 men to deal with what two years ago were described as a band of three thousand fellaghas, poorly armed and equipped, and who until only a few months ago had not even reached the machine-gun stage in their military equipment. Yet who honestly believes that the French in spite of their military superiority will in the end be able to occupy Algeria? And with all these examples before us can anyone believe that Russia could occupy this country, even less the United States against the will of the population?

The power struggle as between the Big Powers seeks the division of the world into zones of influence and economic penetration. If the struggle were, as the politicians and Press seek to make us believe, between East and West, between democracy and totalitarianism, it is difficult to fathom the "lack of understanding" among the nations of the respective "ideological" blocs!

If the régimes of East and West are what each makes out the other

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VIEWPOINT

The 'Freedom' of the Press

DURING recent months, three particular events have provoked comment on the behaviour of newspaper reporters looking for stories.

In two of these, one of which concerned the alleged intrusion of reporters into the family of a murdered girl, and the other one allegations by a representative of B.E.A. that they had caused trouble in a Munich hospital where victims of an aeroplane crash were being treated, an inquiry by the Press Council has found in favour of the Press. Although this decision was rejected by the man who made the complaint, pointing out that the Press Council had acted as "judge and jury" in its own trial, the papers concerned pressed home their triumph in large headlines. The third dispute arose out of a scuffle between reporters and railway police at Euston, and seems to have been dropped with the admission that both sides behaved improperly.

In the other field in which the press is frequently attacked, that of misrepresentation of facts and opinions in reporting, the *Times* was caught out in omitting any reference to a mass meeting in Westminster held by the Nuclear Disarmament movement. Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge laid complaints in particular against the *People* and the *Sunday Express* that they published a distorted account of an article which he had written in an American periodical criticising certain aspects of the monarchy. In what seemed a rather pathetic article in the *New Statesman* Muggeridge made a point which illuminates the problem of inability to comprehend the way in which the feelings and attitudes of the public are exploited by powerful organs, breaking down when he found himself personally affected by it. He admitted to the discovery that not only do many people believe what they read in the newspapers, but some are even prepared to act in consequence of this.

There has recently been a rather strange movement towards acceptance of the tabloid newspapers. This has been expressed several times in the *New Statesman*, and, of all people, by the editor of the *Church of England Newspaper*. This point of view is based on an appreciation of the fact that people differ widely in their tastes and inclinations, and that these differences are likely to be expressed in choice of reading matter; and also on a sincere desire to accept other people's standards, which possibly differ from one's own, without feeling a need to attack them. The idea is a very interesting one, and represents an attempt on the part of these people to get to grips with the 'class division' in the realms of newspaper reading. Despite criticisms here and there, the picture papers are accepted as being a part of our culture, and woe betide any 'intellectual' who dares to criticise them!

"There is nothing wrong with a strip cartoon", was one of the points made by the Rev. Rhodes. Nor is there anything wrong with large, grammatically incorrect headlines, or pages and pages of pictures. These methods of communication between an editorial staff and its readers are certainly the ones which appeal to a great majority of people. But is there anything wrong when the headlines are usually devoted to sensational murders or the private lives of film stars, the strip cartoons are aimed at a mental age of ten (not that a normal ten-year-old would be interested in them) and the pictures are entirely trivial rubbish?

★

IN general, newspapers are definitely out to mislead their readers, and to fortify them in any misconceptions which they may already hold. Since in England they are at least free from the type of police control which exists in totalitarian states, their very rivalry makes it difficult for them to get away with violent mis-statements of fact on important matters. The chief type of misleading lies in the amount of importance with which various events are credited. In the papers with a more working class basis, violent murders and film star divorces have a distinct lead over the eternal conferences of the world's top half-dozen politicians, while among those which aim at the higher paid illiterates, the position

All or Nothing

Newspapers delivered to jails will no longer be censored, the Prison Commissioners have decided. It has been the practice to blue-pencil, or cut out, items considered undesirable.

But a governor will still be allowed to withhold a particular issue if he thinks it necessary.

Daily Express.

is reversed. In all however, the effects of these events on the ordinary people of the world is quite ignored.

Unfortunately, the press is a fairly good reflexion of certain aspects of the personalities of the people who read it. Whatever bad features it has, it is obvious that many people wish them to be so, as anyone can see by mentally investigating the correlation between the contents of various papers, and their circulation figures. To deplore certain of their features does not imply personal criticism either of the people who read them, or those who write them, but on the contrary should lead to an investigation of the social relationships which they reflect. Large numbers of people have been forced into the position in which they have, on the surface, a feeling of identity with the scale of values represented by the *Sketch* or the *Mirror*, others with the *Express*, and it is this which gains such large readerships for these newspapers. Both in form and content, a newspaper must attract a population who were taught to read at the same time as they were being taught to obey orders, submit to authority, look up to the Queen and God, and accept the opinions and values of anyone or anything 'bigger' than themselves. Whether this process took place at a council, grammar or public school, may determine whether they read the *Mirror*, the *Mail* or the *Times*. Though it is work for them as reporters just as one deprecates policemen and regular soldiers, their activities are only symptoms, and the root of the trouble lies in inducing such a change in people's attitudes that they will not be primarily interested in the sort of things which these papers serve up to them.

★

YET in spite of the fact that each newspaper is the representative of a particular power interest, they outbid each other in proclaiming themselves as a "free" press. By making the most of particular incidents such as those mentioned above, they hope to pull the wool over people's eyes when it comes to recognising the general despicability of their everyday activities.

In contrast to the tabloids and their middle-class counterparts, there are in England such newspapers as the *Observer*

and the *Manchester Guardian* which have a many times higher standard of factual reporting, and estimation of importance. They are usually thought of as being representative of a particular section of the professional class, who have the time to read through long articles, and are not particularly interested in the circulation-drumming tactics of their contemporaries. This summing up is largely true, and on this fact many people will dismiss them as being of no social importance to progressive movements. However, the fact remains that by reading such papers carefully, it is possible to get a much clearer idea of what is happening in the world than by reading the tabloids, and when arguments are advanced, they are put in a style which credits the reader with intelligence, and begins with the assumption that there is room for disagreement. The circulations of such papers are small and no doubt largely confined to the so-called professional class.

What would happen if they began to obtain wider readerships? This would come about if and when more people began to take an interest in social affairs in which they needed to be better supplied with facts, and presented with arguments of higher quality. From this point of view it is obviously a step in the right direction when anyone, of whatever class or occupation decides to change from an untrustworthy paper with a popular façade, to a more trustworthy one, even if it is more suspect from the class point of view. Here however lies the problem, for the *Guardian* and the *Observer* are both very interested in maintaining the present capitalist set-up, with modifications to suit themselves. It is interesting to wonder what would happen if large numbers of the population really did begin to demand responsible news, instead of putting up with the present rubbish. Would the higher standard newspapers be so ready to supply them, as they are now that their circulations are restricted to fairly "safe" people who can find the time and inclination to take advantage? There is so much to criticise in these newspapers, particularly their emotional blindness towards the facts which they report so objectively, and their basic assumptions that things must go on generally as they do now, but at the

same time it is possible to be grateful that they do exist.

In support of the popular journals, it is pointed out that all newspapers have a function in society, and that one should not be criticised by the standards of another. In our present society, one of the dominating features is the conflict between those people who control the coercive forces of the State, and through them the means of production, and those who, not being in such a position have to submit their labour to the others. This conflict affects all aspects of life, and among them reading habits, and if one is to think in terms of the functions of particular types of newspaper here and now, then it is in terms of a divided society. Those who find nothing basically at fault with the *Sketch* or the *Mirror* are showing that they contemplate, or perhaps even wish for, an indefinite prolongation of this state of affairs. That seems to be a far greater insult to the readers of such papers, than to attack them and wish for their speedy disappearance. An important consideration regarding the better papers is that an increasing demand for them might provoke the kind of dialectical conflict which will produce a progressive alternative.

★

WHAT kind of alternatives are there?

There is at the moment only one daily newspaper which claims to be at least syndicalist in outlook, *Dagstidningen Arbetaren*, published by the Swedish Workers' Central Organisation* but the radical elements within that body make it clear that they think very poorly of its policy. During the Spanish revolution, anarchist (or at least CNT) dailies sprang up in several places, including Barcelona (*Solidaridad Obrera*) and Valencia (*Fragua Social*), and in Italy *Umanità Nova* appeared daily from 1920 for many years, being published in Milan.

However, on the whole, the large scale centralised organisation necessary for the production of a daily newspaper does not seem very compatible with anarchist ideas, and there does not seem to be much hope of anything along these lines succeeding, whatever should be the underlying structure of society. In fact, part of the progress towards an anarchist society would clearly involve the actual disappearance of the present structure of the press. While it is true that to-day, local newspapers are almost always highly conservative in outlook, that is certainly not an essential feature of local organisations, and one would hope to see a flourishing of locally produced and printed journals, perhaps with some small news-gathering agencies to serve them with facts about national and international events.

Some anarchists have described the newspapers of their personal Utopias as being sheets of facts, devoid of any expressions of personal opinion. This would lead to a very dull state of affairs, and a far better thought is that there would be much more expression of

*It has recently ceased publication as a Daily.—Ed.]

The Chartists

Continued from p. 2

economic reforms, but the election of a chamber dominated by bankers, landlords, army officers and others of the propertied classes, who—as he clearly discerned at the time—were intent on sabotaging Louis Blanc's *Ateliers Nationaux*. This revelation was deepened by his observation during sixteen years in America of the idiocy of democratic politics. He lived on to witness the 'socialist revival' of the 1880's and the rise of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. and took a warm interest in their activities. He endorsed the economic aspects of their collectivist programme but, interestingly enough, towards the political organisation of labour his attitude was more conditional. "What accounted for a certain coolness on his part toward the I.L.P. programme," explains Dr. Schoyen, "was its inclusion of a provision binding members to follow party directives in voting on candidates. This aroused all the fears engendered by his observation of American politics; the spectre of a tyrannical caucus dictating to individuals once again. Economic collectivism was one thing, political collectivism another, and Harney's personal experience had developed in him what sometimes amounted to almost an obsessive horror of encroachment on personal liberties by intolerant majorities."

A passage like this sets one doubting whether Harney, were he alive to-day, would still be a social democrat. The small black cloud of political collectivism which he perceived over sixty years ago has since enveloped the world. The mass party with its caucus, using according to the conditions in which it operates either the block vote or the political police, has been found to be the indispensable machine for mobilising and manipulating 'demo-

cracy'. Perhaps, after all, his shade might now be found endorsing that most un-chartist dictum of his more percipient contemporary, Pierre Joseph Proudhon: "Universal suffrage . . . this great principle of democracy is a corollary of the federal principle or nothing."

GEOFFREY OSTERGAARD.

Poland's Economic Crisis

THE rulers in Capitalist and Communist countries would like the people they govern to believe that there are fundamental differences in their ideological and economic systems. This is useful for a number of reasons, one of them being that they can always point to the defects 'of the other side' and, in the case of the West, tell us how much better off we are living in a condition of freedom, but of course it has to be defended by H-bombs! The people living under Communist rule are told that the capitalist hyenas are just waiting the opportunity to wage war and impose a capitalist tyranny.

In spite of all these differences which are supposed to exist it is curious that the workers behind and in front of the Iron Curtain are subject to similar fears and economic pressures.

In Communist Poland the government, in trying to solve the economic crisis, has decided to sack from 200,000 to 300,000 workers from the factories. This is one of the ways by which the capitalist countries deal with their economic problems, also.

Poland's difficulty arises from under-production due, it is claimed, to inefficient planning. Gomulka's remedy is mass dismissal of "sur-

plus, lazy and unskilled workmen". Last week some production figures were released:—

At the Zeran auto plant, 8,000 workers are currently building 15,000 cars a year (U.S. auto workers in a good year produce ten cars or more per man). At Nowa Huta, 18,000 workers last year turned out 984,000 tons of steel. In Poland the average worker produced less than 55 tons of steel last year; in West Germany he produced 140 tons.

Supporters of competitive capitalism will be quick to blame the inefficiency of State planning for the economic crisis in Poland, but they will be slow to explain the reasons why redundancy occurs in well-equipped, efficiently-run "free" enterprise concerns when the problem is often one of over-production.

The fact is that recurring economic crisis is inevitable under a system of capitalism, whether State controlled or competitive. Both systems function by producing goods for profit for which markets have to be found. Obviously ways will be sought by which goods can be produced efficiently with the minimum of cost.

But State controlled concerns can be just as efficient as individually run competitive ones. Neither systems however, can allow economic equality or indeed aim at that.

opinion than there is to-day. The ending of competition between power-seeking interests would lead to the development of a far deeper current of discussion, in which genuine differences of opinion would be argued, instead of meaningless words being used to disguise actual rooted conflict of material interest, as happens now.

Delightful and distant though such thoughts are, they have some relevance to-day. If we can think about the press and judge it by libertarian standards, be selective as a result of such judgment and be in a position to enter discussion with others, it is a controversial topic on which much interest is being aroused, and on which anarchism has some distinctive contributions to make.

P.H.

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