

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"No good ever came from law.
All reforms have been the off-
spring of revolution."
—HENRY T. BUCKLE.

CALLING ALL SOCIALISTS!

IF this week we again return to the subject of the Labour Party's election post-mortem we hope no reader will infer that we are either interested in resuscitating the corpse, or of offering advice on how to win the next elections. But we are interested in reaching the socialists among the 12 million people who voted Labour and among the 7 million who didn't vote at all. And the best time to try to remove illusions about Socialism-via-the-ballot box is surely now and not at election-time, when though admittedly people are more politically conscious, their objectivity is pitifully taxed by sentimental political loyalties, promises by one of the parties on issues which they feel strongly, or simply because they would hate the local Tory to win by the one vote they might not cast against him!

If the Labour leaders have got a lot of re-thinking to do between now and the next elections—if they want to win them—equally socialists and anarchists will need to engage

in a lot of thought and action if in the meantime they want to make some progress along the road towards the free society.

Mr. Bevan was quite right when he declared that the defeat of the Labour Party did not imply a final rejection of socialism by the British electorate. Had the Labour Party campaigned on an uncompromising socialist programme, it may well have lost more votes than it did. But that was not the problem, declared Mr. Bevan. The programme on which the Labour Party fought the election could only be described as similar to that of "pre-1914 liberalism brought up to date".*

But welcome as Mr. Bevan's declaration is, the fact remains that for a very large section of the public, socialism is represented by the

*We quote from his article published in the Paris weekly *L'Express* (Oct. 16), which we assume to be a translation of the *News of the World* article of Oct. 11—which unfortunately we have mislaid.

Trade Unions and the Labour Party. So that what with the policies it advocates and the imaginary policies attributed to it by the gutter press to chill the spines of its gullible, respectable, readers, the present generation's picture of socialism is, understandably, more like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* than *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*!

IT already seems clear that the Labour Party's "re-thinking" will develop along two lines, at least. On the one hand the fanatical ballot-boxers for whom winning elections has become an end in itself, on the other those who believe (until the next election?) that the *raison d'être* of the Labour Party is the implementation of socialist policies, according to their understanding of socialism, of course!

Re-thinking for the former will not involve re-reading the socialist texts of Blatchford, Morris and Cole. For them what the Labour Party

needs are Public Relations men, advertising experts and psychologists (not forgetting "experts" like Mr. Robert McKenzie who was busily carving up the Party in last Sunday's *Observer*† so that apparently, it could function better next time). More national advertising and less nationalisation; more Public Relations Officers and less of the Public Ownership nonsense; more socialites in the Party and fewer socialists! Not only has the prostrate Labour

Party been obliged to listen to its garrulous Douglas Jay advocate in print for all to read, that it should drop nationalisation and change its name, but the reappraisals of some of the other top intellectuals is far from reassuring. For instance, Mr. R. H. S. Crossman (sacked from his column by the *Daily Mirror* who have also been rethinking their pro-Labour policy in the light of a falling circulation), writing in the *New Statesman* explains Labour's loss of votes in these terms:

In this era of Tory prosperity a Labour opposition has to run very fast
Continued on p. 3

'Workers of the World..'

IT is not easy to understand the mentality which totally disregards the most elementary needs of an already under-privileged group. Yet the 200 workers at a factory in Derbyshire now on strike to force the dismissal of seven coloured workers are preparing to hold out until their "black brothers" are left jobless. No complaints have been made against the men, their only fault is in being coloured.

Up until last week six coloured workers were employed by Glow Worm Boilers, Ltd., who had offered an assurance to the rest of their employees that no additional coloured labour would be employed on work for which white labour was available. According to an official of the Company, a seventh was employed as no "alternative" (white) men were available.

The seven men (at time of writing) are still officially employed and the 200 men are back at work. But Jack Wathall, secretary at the factory of the National Union of Stoves, Grates and General Metal Workers said that: "Talks between union and management can go on after our return, but all our members are determined that the seven Coloured men here must go. Our return makes no difference to that view."

It is even more depressing, if accounts are true, that the original six coloured men struck with the others when it was learned that the seventh, Sohan Lal, a Punjabi, was taken on. Their own dismissal is now being demanded in spite of their show of "loyalty". But what a difficult position they were in, because had they not come out on strike, the white workers would have resented them even more.

Coloured men and women in a white community having to compete for jobs against each other as well as white labour cannot really be expected in the difficult atmosphere of coloured prejudice to always practise principles of solidarity against such odds. But it is only in the exercise of these principles that prejudices will be broken down and competition between workers eliminated.

Quite another story is reported about white and coloured relationships from Birmingham where 30 drivers and warehousemen came out on strike because a coloured worker was dismissed, not, it is stated, for reasons of colour but because his temporary job had come to an end.

Mohammed Ghulam is so popular among his workmates that their actions have brought an agreement from his employers to keep him until the end of the year, when the Union will try to find him fresh work:—

Ghulam, who is called "Bill" by his workmates, had been employed as a temporary labourer for a year, but he was given three weeks' notice on Thursday. He had become one of the most popular workers at the firm, even though he cannot speak English, and Mr. Thomas Budding, a Transport and General Workers' Union shop steward, said: "We regard him as one of the most helpful and courteous of colleagues. You don't have to ask him for help; he is always there to give it."

Ghulam was a soldier for sixteen years and one of the strikers said: "He is a first-rate man, who served his country well. He has got a personal letter from General Auchinleck to prove that. He endured the sufferings of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, and we feel we owe him something."

WHICH WAY IN CUBA

DURING the last three weeks, FREEDOM has published an account of the revolution in Cuba which at the beginning of this year resulted in the overthrow of the Batista régime and its replacement by the government of Fidel Castro. The report was prepared by the Libertarian Association of Cuba, and is a useful, concise story of the events immediately connected with the change of government, and the realisations of the new government, as seen by the people of libertarian sympathies who are actually living in Cuba, and directly affected by the type of government.

It is clear that from that point of view a great change for the better has taken place. For seven years the people of Cuba have been subjected to concentrated brutality, including arbitrary arrest, torture and execution, and burning of houses. Now this has been removed, although the Libertarian Association qualify this as being "at least for the present". The army and police force are still in existence, with their security branches under different names, and the tradition of tyranny is still sufficiently strong that they could be used again to support the Castro régime in the same way as they were used by Batista. Furthermore, "The state and capitalism, with their traditional methods of the wage system, private property, supply and demand, prices, competition, and all the other means which make possible the exploitation of man by man, are still in force". What is even more relevant is that these features of authoritarian society will no doubt be much stronger under the new government than under the old. It was becoming obvious that the American government was being weaned from supporting Batista as a result of the extreme demoralisation of his régime, of which the report speaks. Investments were being withheld. Therefore, while the Castro régime is many times preferable to that of Batista from the point of view of the absence of brutality, it cannot be considered as in any way, "a step towards a libertarian goal".

The report lays emphasis on several of the reforms effected by the new government. Of these, the equivalents of "Rent Tribunals" and compulsory purchase of land for development have been current in Britain for many years, despite the absence of revolutions. It is interesting to note that of the others, at least two have had immediate side effects which have brought hardship to sections of the people. The laws converting the National Lottery into an Association for Savings and Housing has put the ticket

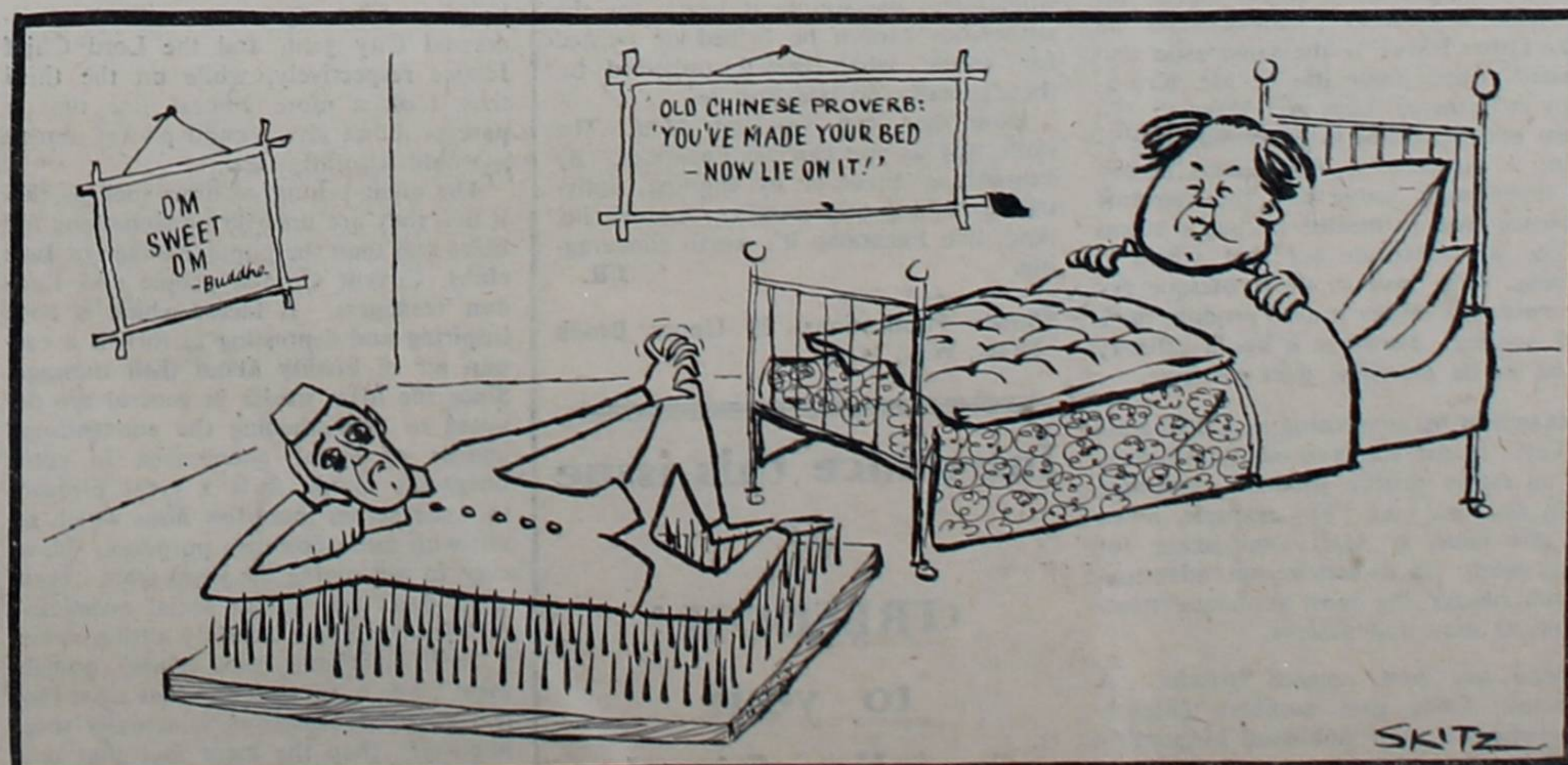
sellers out of work, while more seriously, the Rent Laws have resulted in a withdrawal of investment in building, and 80 thousand builders are without jobs. A fifth reform said to be in the air concerns the armed forces, but the report remarks that replacement of Batista officers by Castro officers is more apparent than changes in the set-up of the forces.

All these facts are only to be expected, in looking at the results of a revolution from an anarchist point of view. The current issues are, how should they be interpreted, and what should the anarchist attitude to them and to the government behind them be? From this point of view, it seems that the Libertarian Association are far more sympathetic to the allegedly "Revolutionary" government than a thorough-going anarchist approach would allow. Its report emphasises that Castro and his immediate associates are men of undoubted integrity, a fact which has resulted in an important clearing up of administration. It cannot be stated too often, that the anarchist case against giving power to governments does not rest on the bad faith or motives of the potential governors, although these may be incidentally called into question. The fact is that government corrupts social relationships. The government's land reform will not make the farmers one jot more independent or free. At best they will exchange

one set of chains for another; at worst, they will simply have one more set of officials living off their backs. Furthermore there are alternatives which are worth canvassing from a libertarian angle. On a small scale, any voluntary co-operation between neighbouring farmers, any effort to set up research units, or implement sharing groups, independent of state control can be regarded as a step towards freedom. On the larger, long term scale the anarchist way is to try to propagate and demonstrate the need for a revolutionary social transformation, controlled by the people themselves. Yet it is impossible to advocate this at the same time as one is urging the peasants to trust in the state's schemes for their betterment, the state's instructions on how to increase production, or the state's schemes for educating them.

An objection to the above point of view is that from a peaceful position in the British Welfare State, one cannot fully appreciate the benefits which the "revolutionary" government is bringing to Cuba after the horrors of the last seven years. This is a quite valid point. On the other hand, the Welfare State shows just how many reforms are brought about by factors quite irrelevant to the issues in which libertarians are interested, rather than by the good works of slightly better governments.

SYNDICALIST.



"Sweet Dreams, Comrade" !

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Some Reflections on Anarchism

FRIENDLY critics of anarchism often argue that it is nothing more than another belief in a millennium. Thus, anarchists are very much like certain fundamentalist sects (so goes this criticism) in looking forward to a perfect society. The origins of millennial beliefs are perhaps to be traced by the psychologists, but the question of origins need not concern us here. The point of the criticism is that belief in a perfect society is delusive, that the world is much more recalcitrant to human desires than the anarchists believe, and that a sensible person will recognize this fact and develop beliefs which correspond to what is possible in the way of social improvement. The anarchist refusal to vote and otherwise take part in political affairs is viewed by these critics as at best a manifestation of an unreasonably sensitive moral sense and at worst the expression of sheer irresponsibility. (Thus, 'beatniks' are commonly identified with anarchists). These criticisms raise a number of questions, among them, Is anarchism necessarily millennialist? If so, is it for this reason unacceptable? What is possible (and impossible) in society? What is 'reasonable' moral sensitivity? What is irresponsibility?

The anarchist answer to the first question is by no means obvious. The notion of millennium must be clarified. The term, with its Christian apocalyptic connotations, is no doubt galling to many anarchists, yet the notion of a perfect society, which is its core meaning, is I think at the heart of anarchism. Certainly the anarchist must have before him a conception of a society which is in some sense perfect, in terms of which he criticises present institutions and practices—and chooses his own courses of action.

The anarchist, if he is to be called an anarchist and thus set apart from other men, must never be a 'piecemeal' critic of society. His criticisms must be governed by a standard and directed toward a goal. Critics may point out that a perfect society is in a sense a contradiction in terms. That is, perfection implies completion, whereas society is in constant flux, constantly confronted by new problems requiring new conceptions for their solution. Society can never be perfect, if it is to be society and not a Platonic archetype. This criticism is well taken, though I think anarchists are too well aware of the nature of society to be guilty of such a contradiction in

terms. A 'perfect' society, speaking generally, is not a static ideal, but rather a society in which the best methods are employed for the solution (and avoidance) of social problems. What is the best method for the solution of a social problem is, of course, a function of the possibilities (technological, psychological, etc.) implicit in a society. The criterion of what is best must always be practical success (in the long run as well as the short run) in solving problems. Anarchists have rightly avoided drawing up complete blueprints for the future, since this would imply a static millennialism. However, given the anarchist view of what constitutes social problems, this caution should not lead to an avoidance of all blueprints however sketchy. In reply to the first question, then, it would seem that anarchism is necessarily bound up with some belief in a millennium.

Before replying to the second question, Is such a belief false? we must ask what precisely is the content of the anarchist belief. Certainly it is not that such a society is inevitable. Rather, it is that such a society is possible (and, being perfect, desirable). As I have analysed the concept of perfection, it would seem that such a society is possible, unless it can be shown that men when confronted with a problem inevitably choose those methods of solution which are less successful than others which are available. Since there is no evidence for this, there is no reason for rejecting millennialism (so defined) as a false belief. The third question, What is possible (and impossible) in society? can only be answered in the light of what are accepted as laws of nature. What these laws are can best be ascertained by a study of science, physical and social.

★

WHAT I have said so far about anarchist millennialism would permit us to treat to some extent at least other schools of political thought as millennialist as well. More must be said of the anarchist perfect society to distinguish it from the perfect societies of, say, the Communists or Tories. The motives of political leaders may be suspect, but I think it is a mistake to impute evil motives to all politicians. Regardless of motives, the public statements of most reflective political leaders imply that they believe that a perfect society (so defined) is possible, provided they are elected. Certainly their followers believe this. The only difference between anarchism and opposing doctrines at this stage in the discussion would be that the anarchist keeps a comparatively open mind regarding possible methods and is prepared to reject traditional methods in the light of scientific knowledge. He is, or should be, freer of dogma, more

aware of alternatives, than his opponents.

Earlier I referred vaguely to "social problems". It is clear from a perusal of political literature that not everyone recognises the same problems. What is a pressing problem to one person may not seem so to another. What is and what is not a problem (or important problem) is, I think, a function of what is valued. To the anarchist personal freedom is extremely valuable. To others it is not. Hence, the anarchist will see grave problems where personal liberty is threatened, while others will not. This does not mean that personal liberty is of no value to people other than anarchists, but that other things are of greater value to them. There is considerable agreement among normal civilized human beings as to what things have value. Disagreement is largely over the ordering of these items.

While food, clothing, and shelter are highly valued by all, there is disagreement over the ranking of such items as love, status, freedom, knowledge, power, national prestige, private property, piety, art, order, tradition, etc. It is in his valuational scale that the anarchist most differs from his opponents. It is because of this that he will see problems where others see none, and vice versa. It is because of this that his ideal society will differ from the ideal societies of his opponents, since both ends and means are constitutive of one's 'millennial' expectations. It is because of this that he is accused of having too much of a social conscience (or none at all). In fact, his 'irresponsibility' lies simply in his different scale of values.

Some of the implications that I find in this analysis are that (1) Anarchism, if it is to survive, must not lose sight of its 'millennialism'. (2) Anarchist criticism of existing society should be twofold: (a) It should attack the irrational, obscurantist approach to so many pressing social problems which is employed by governments today. A good grounding in the sciences is essential to the success of such an attack. (b) It should attack the order of values of opposing systems. To do this well the anarchist should be clear about his own valuational system. He should also have a background in moral philosophy. Contemporary authors in this field have much to say about techniques for criticising and changing the moral attitudes of others. (3) The anarchists should recognize that there are many who differ from them only slightly on moral and practical questions. Those individuals should not be ignored or castigated, but every effort should be made to establish communication with them. After all, we may learn from them as they learn from us.

M. G. ANDERSON.

Review

How Can You Get 'Mad'?

ADMIRERS of the "offbeat" forms of humour, reared on S. J. Perlman with Charles Addams and Jules Feiffer prints on the wall, and listening to the LP Tom Lehrer on the radiogram, have long found their curious form of pleasure in *Mad* the American magazine of humour (as they describe it) 'in a jugular vein'.

It was *Mad* which roused the patriotic ire of the *Daily Mirror* when it satirized the life of the English Royal Family on a comic strip level ("Can Charles Be Like Other Boys?")—the same issue also treated of the home life of Mr. Krushchev in terms of 'Jiggs and Maggie'. To them nothing seems to be sacred. Everything is satirized, to some tastes it may at times seem crude and the slapstick violence that permeates its pages seems to be no substitute for that which it attacks. The love of the grotesque for its own sake marks it as a product for a sick society. However it has a salutary effect in its merciless mickey-taking.

It carries no advertising as a deliberate policy. It also seems to maintain a market in rather peurile products associated with the *Mad* cult. For example, noted in one issue, a *Mad* strait-jacket for party-wear. In its satirization, advertisements receive the most ferocious treatment, as they well deserve.

Mad has now entered Britain. A selection from past numbers (slightly Anglicised) is now published bi-monthly in Britain*, but it has been decided 'on legal advice' that the British wholesale newsagents will not handle it.

Experience with FREEDOM has shown that minority publications stand little chance with the wholesalers whose criterion of judgment is not freedom of expression but the cash nexus. Like insurance companies, they will take anything except risks. The cry may go up of censorship from you-know-who, but this is not really a question of censorship but a built-in conditioned reflex which proves that like the British journalist, the wholesalers are sound at heart, for the authorities cannot be bribed or twisted for seeing what they'll unbribe to, there's really no occasion to'.
How then can you get *Mad*. The same way as you can get FREEDOM. By subscribing direct or by cajoling, bullying or bribing your retailer to stock it. And, like FREEDOM, it's worth encouraging.
J.R.

*Strato Publications, 39 Upper Brook Street, W.1., 1s. 6d.

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CINEMA

Death on the Screen

WHEN we think of censorship in plays and films we tend to think of sex first and then of political and social prejudice. For a change take a look at death. Oddly enough, death in literature is usually extremely unconvincing. Nearly every modern author except Hemingway and Lawrence has been able to make sexual intercourse credible, but the only ones I can think of who have done the same for death are Dostoyevsky, Nabokov and Graham Greene. It is of course almost impossible to die convincingly on the stage; indeed, if an actor did so, half the audience would faint and the other half would throw up.

But the cinema screen is the one place where death could be really well done. It hardly ever is. Consider the average war-film, western or thriller. Death is usually instantaneous, and when it is not it is either silent or punctuated only by the vital message the victim must give before the last, tactful, gasp.

Struggles, pain, screams, groans and all the other details that go to make our exits as unpleasant as our entrances are as tabu as sexual intercourse itself. The only convincing death I have seen in an American film is the final one in *Baby Face Nelson*; in an English one, Oliver's superb performance in *Richard III*. Otherwise death seems to be too eloquent, just and mighty for film producers and actors.

These reflections are occasioned by an interesting programme I saw recently at the Hampstead Playhouse. The two films shown were *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *Ashes and Diamonds*. The subject of each was the same—death; the treatment could hardly have been more different. On the one hand, perhaps the most perfect and light-hearted of all the Ealing comedies; on the other, a suitably grim third instalment of Andrzej Wajda's biting

series of war-films.

The English film is a comedy, so the theme of death has to be lightly treated—i.e., distorted. Of the eight murders, six take place off the screen altogether (is it if it were a Greek tragedy), and the other two—poison and drowning—are travesties. The suicide too is off-screen, and the prospective hanging is only a joke. Any intrusion of reality would wreck the illusion (so beautifully kept up) that death is funny.

There could be no better corrective than the Polish film. A young nationalist assassin has to shoot a Communist official on the day the war ends in a little Polish town; first the wrong people are shot, then he falls in love, but in the end he gets his man and is himself shot in the stomach. When the elderly, limping official is shot, you see the bullet-holes in the back of his mackintosh as he falls with his arms round the neck of his murderer. And when the boy is shot you see his death-agony from the moment that he finds blood on his hand to the last kick of his legs on the rubbish dump where he screams out his life.

Quite apart from the fantastic skill of the direction and acting, why is it that *Ashes and Diamonds* is so shocking and impressive? Because it tells the truth. Because death is solitary, nasty and brutish. Because we are used to seeing death as the solution to the knotty parts of the story, and Wajda sees it as death. From childhood we see violence and death on television and cinema screens, more often justified than not. Let's hope we see it more often as Wajda sees it, as it is. A human life is worth nothing, said Malraux, but nothing is worth a human life. The truth of that would be more apparent if we were more aware what the end of a human life involves.

N.W.

The Lambeth Boys

WE ARE THE LAMBETH BOYS. Curzon.

THIS is another film in the tradition pioneered recently by the "Free Cinema" Group, in which the documentary lay-out is used to investigate and portray human personality as it is expressed through interesting social groups. It goes a little way beyond some of the previous ones, in giving a more complete picture of the lives of the Lambeth Boys, rather than concentrating on a particular aspect of their recreation, as did "Momma don't allow" or of their work, as in "Every day except Christmas".

One of its most effective techniques is that of contrast, with different situations coming into the picture through unobtrusive connecting links. The contrasts between the day's work and the evening's play, the cricket match between Lambeth and Mill Hill Public School; and the final lorry ride through the West End where the boys need to show off, and the drab and quiet streets of Lambeth where they can allow themselves to be quiet, are memorable.

A particularly important part of the film gave a couple of glances into the discussion group which the warden of the Boy's Club organises. The topics discussed were clothes, and how much money should be spent on them; capital punishment; and pocket money. On the first two the boys and girls seemed to be in complete agreement with the well-dressed City gent, and the Lord Chief Justice respectively, while on the third they took a more amoral line that if parents didn't give a child pocket money it would naturally steal.

The great beauty of films such as this is that they are uncovering something far more real than the popular image of Jazz clubs, Covent Garden people and London 'teenagers'. A factor which is both inspiring and depressing in turn is a certain air of finality about their message. Since the mass media in general are devoted to strengthening the conventional images of social phenomena in petit-bourgeois minds, it is a great pleasure to come across these few films which set out with more objective purposes. However, in welcoming the jump from "Teenagers don't care about social questions" to "Teenagers are actually sitting round a room talking about capital punishment", one is apt to forget that what they feel about the question is actually more important than the mere fact that they are discussing it. Contemporary writers and film makers have at last got back to the work of interpreting society. The

task of changing it still remains.

Unfortunately this wonderful half hour film is in the same programme as 1½ hours of distasteful boredom in "Les Cousins". This is advertised threateningly as the first of the new wave of French films. P.H.

Letter

Anarchists and Elections

SINCE misunderstanding seem to be widespread in the discussion of voting and elections, I would like to clear up one contained in Nicolas Walter's letter. As far as I am concerned, the Labour Party is welcome to the votes of Mankowitz, Osborne, and Nicolas Walter. I had no intention of claiming the former two in support of the anarchist case, which does not need their support, but rather to discuss a phenomenon that was brought out very clearly by the election.

Many anarchists including myself, had noticed during the last few years a tendency to despise politics, and show it up as being irrelevant to the important issues in peoples lives. This had been crystallized in the writings of the people who I mentioned. Now, on the first occasion when their attitude is put to the test, the whole of this flock, muttering incoherent apologies now and then, rush to support the dear old Labour Party. What was the test which produced this change of heart? It was not relief that democracy had come to the top after seven years of bloody tyranny, not the imminent threat of a de Gaulle or fascism, not the need for unity in the face of civil war, not the outbreak of war against a foreign power, all of which have in the past made anarchically minded people support democracy, but a counting of crosses to see whether Gaitskell or Macmillan should nominally head the next cabinet. To my mind this (a) destroys the illusion that the attitudes represented by these people can be regarded as 'a trend towards our way of thinking' and (b) suggests that their attitudes are mere spineless dilettantism, with a terrific stake in authoritarian society and could not bear anything such as electoral abstention which might undermine its foundations.

PHILIP HOLGATE.

(more letters printed on p.4)

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CALLING ALL SOCIALISTS!

Continued from p. 1

to stay where it is. Each year which takes us further, not only from the hungry Thirties but from the austere Forties, weakens class consciousness. And if nothing is done to stop this national tendency, more and more Socialist voters turn first into don't knows and then into active Tories. It is my belief that the campaign which Hugh Gaitskell led is the only thing which prevented a catastrophic landslide last Thursday. Without it we might have lost not twenty-three but up to a hundred seats, and been left with virtually no representation south of the Trent. What we achieved was a last minute rally which enabled us to poll our loyal vote throughout the country, and even to make some middle of the roaders consider the possibility of voting Labour.

A Labour Party "running very fast in order to stay where it is" in "this era of Tory prosperity" is a somewhat confusing image, for "Tory prosperity" would imply that the stage is moving forward in which case the Labour Party is running backwards. Why should it bother to run backwards in order to stay where it is? As Bevan put it in his *Express* article, if one has to understand the reason why a majority of the electorate voted Tory and adjust the Party's policy accordingly then "from a logical point of view it means that we should all join the Conservative Party, since it is manifest that it is the Party closest to the present feelings of the electorate".

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THE more realistic view is to our minds put forward by those who think the Labour Party should move to the Left rather than to the Right—more realistic, let us hasten to add, not because we think they will achieve socialism through the ballot box, but because they will in fact survive as a Party, albeit as an opposition—whereas the Crossman and Jay roads will inevitably lead to the absorption of the Labour Party by the Tories and the Liberals, with the principled socialists, who "would rather be right than be President", either giving up the struggle or, as we hope, seeing that there is something, after all, in what the anarchists have been saying for these past hundred years!

Barbara Castle in the same issue of the *New Statesman* concluded that

Labour's function is to civilise society economically, so that men and women are educated by their environment in a sense of community and in a wider vision of self-interest than the pursuit of a higher and higher individual wage. If we forget this lesson while learning others that must certainly be learnt—lessons of organisation, of presentation, of the need for more political courage—then the Labour Party will die from the inside, and men of conscience and social vision will turn away from us.

What a vindication for the so-called "negative" attitude of the anarchists, coming from the Labour

†"Labour's Need for Surgery" (*The Observer* 25/10/59). In this article Mr. McKenzie proposes that anybody in the L.P. who was troubled by principles should leave the Party and join a "new I.L.P." in which "there is certainly a place" for those "who in the American phrase 'would rather be right than be President'." Having scoured the Party clean of any principled elements it could then concern itself with the real issues. "Politics will be about how we should share between us the burdens and benefits of the 'mixed economy plus Welfare State' which clearly reflects the basic consensus among us in domestic affairs. The proposals for a capital gains tax is exactly the sort of issue which illuminates the real difference between the parties in domestic affairs". How right he is! But on what social grounds does he suggest that this state of affairs should be perpetuated?

Party's chairman! Last December, commenting in these columns on the L.P.'s Manifesto† we wrote:

The Future Labour Offers You is too slick both in presentation and content to be Socialist or true. The production, left to the professional publicity boys is in the most expensive traditions of proprietary medicine advertising, suitable for selling pills and panaceas but not socialism; the content, cooked up by the successful journalist-intellectual-economist bright boys of the Party aims at the lowest common denominator both in human intelligence and petty materialism... The Labour Party hierarchy are out to win the sweet fruits of power; for this they need votes. Hence they offer a plan which aims at pandering to the material interests of a majority of the population—but then so do the Tories, and so far quite successfully!

★

ON October 8, the Labour Party were hoist with their own petard, and we were neither surprised nor sorry. If anybody wishes to criticise our position on the grounds that by our attitude we reveal an indifference to the fate of the working classes, the Nyasas and the cause of Nuclear Disarmament, our reply is that whatever government is in office the system remains, and it is not by changing governments but by fighting the system that

‡FREEDOM 13/12/58. Reprinted in Vol. 8 *Freedom Selections*, which in view of the election results has, we think, been most aptly given the title "Socialism in a Wheelchair" (*Freedom Press*, 7/6d.).

§As Attlee was pointing out in his *The Labour Party in Perspective* (1937) from which we quoted last week: "Such liberty as they [the majority of the people] have got as workers has been the fruit of long and bitter struggles by the Trade Unions (p.141)... Factory inspectors are necessary because many employers lack social sense... Their presence is not due to the Socialist but the anti-Socialist spirit" (p.143).

the working classes will eventually free themselves§

As to the fate of the Nyasas, if 12 million voters for the Labour Party feel sufficiently strongly about the issue of Federation are we to believe that they have neither the wit nor the energy to take action which will convince any Government where its interest lies in the matter? (quite apart from the fact that the issue of Federation will be decided by the Nyasas themselves ultimately, whatever the government decides next year).

Finally, on the question of nuclear disarmament, who among the members of the Labour Party has the impertinence to suggest that a Labour government offers greater prospects of achieving these ends than a Tory administration? It is true that only this week Lord Attlee told an Australian radio audience that he proposed to spend the rest of his life (note that he is now 71!) "fighting for world disarmament". Yet only a few months ago, in the *Observer* we believe, we read an article of his in which he expressed his approval of President Truman's action in pressing the button which launched the A-bombs that annihilated, maimed or subjected to a slow and painful death thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nor have we forgotten that it was Bevan, who at the Labour Party Conference in 1957 refused to support a motion calling on this country to ban the Bomb "unilaterally".

However Left he may feel inclined to go now that his chances of occupying the Foreign Minister's armchair seem more than ever remote, let no one forget that when he thought in terms of power, or at least office, he considered that to

pass the motion would mean that "you would send the British Foreign Secretary naked into the conference Chamber". If this is the attitude of the "socialist" leaders of the Labour Party when out of office what would be their actions when in office?

★

IN quoting Barbara Castle as being more "realistic" than the Jays and the Crossmans who, it seems to us are the liquidators of the Labour Party, we are nevertheless not seduced by her references to a "sense of community" and "wider vision of self-interest". These people want to eat their cake and have it; they want a sense of community and at the same time a government with executive powers; they want something nobler than "self interest linked to a higher and higher individual wage" yet never attack the money system; indeed they fall over backwards to assure the public that their "socialism" encourages the ambitious person to "get on"—within the capitalist system. They talk of the egalitarian system, yet when have they suggested pensioning-off the Monarchy and its horsey retinue? They pose as internationalists by definition, yet this is the kind of tripe served up on *Tribune's* front page (16/10/59) after the defeat:

Under the Tories, Britain is doomed to be a back number among the nations. A certain narrow, blinkered, lazy kind of comfort—the kind with which so many voters have just shown themselves satisfied—may be maintained. But neither economically, socially, nor in the achievement of world stature and leadership can Britain seize the chances that should be ours.

By a "back number" they mean statistically, output of steel in millions of tons, output of cars, refrigerators, and why not bombers

and missiles as well as motorways and nylon panties? Surely for the socialist, as for the anarchist, the influence that a nation can exert on world affairs, and towards internationalism, is its ability to submerge its identity as a nation and to direct its attention and its message not to politicians but to the peoples of the world. What do these demagogues mean by "world stature and leadership"? Socialists should think in terms of co-operation, example, identity with the people in all territories. But how can they even start thinking in those terms without first rejecting centralised authority (government), in our social- and the capitalist system (production for profit) in our economic- relations?

As Mr. Attlee put it in 1937 when the "responsibilities of office" had not warped his objectivity,

The abolition of classes is fundamental to the Socialist conception of society. Whatever may be the professions of belief in democracy made by the supporters of the present system, they do, in fact, think it right and natural that there should be class distinctions.

But the Labour Party believe in the present system. The trouble, according to the Party's enfant terrible "Tribune", is that the Tories don't know how to run the system.

With a properly planned effort, Britain could advance to the standard of living taken for granted in America and now confidently expected by Russia's young generation. But the Tories have successfully hidden the need for such an effort.

So when we "advance to the standard of living taken for granted in America" we've got Socialism? So there's socialism in America after all in spite of the fact that big business is in control and the Republicans are in office?

Come off it *Tribune*! Socialism surely is "made of sterner stuff"?

PEOPLE AND IDEAS:

CONVERSATIONS IN SICILY

IN his book *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Carlo Levi sowed the seed of a new genre in Italian literature: the attempt by Northern writers to give voice to the silent and unheeded Southern poor. The late Rocca Scotellaro took the attempt further in his *Contadini del Sud*, (Peasants of the South) in which a number of Lucanian peasants told their story directly without the overt intrusion of the author, and the enquiry was extended to Sicily by Leonardo Sciascia's *La Parrocchia di Regalpetra*, and Danilo Dolci's *Banditi a Partinico* which, after a chapter of statistics, put the reader face to face with the confessions, the resentful and pathetic outpourings of the "bandits" of Partinico, in their own words.

Three such books on Sicily have now appeared in England; Carlo Levi's *Words are Stones* (the Italian edition of which was reviewed in *FREEDOM* for 28/4/56), Danilo Dolci's *To Feed the Hungry*, which is an admirable but incomplete translation of his more soberly titled *Inchiesta a Palermo*, and Gavin Maxwell's *The Ten Pains of Death*.

Mr. Gollancz says on the jacket of Levi's book that he has in it "done for Sicily what he did, a decade ago for Eboli"—a typical Gollanczism, since firstly the earlier book was not about Eboli and secondly since Levi himself says "The reader must not expect to find in the present book as in *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, a first discovery of a dawning world and of its dimensions... Let him seek rather for more modest things..." What he does in fact, is to give an account of three journeys in Sicily. He accompanies the return to his native village of Mr. Impelleriti, the then Mayor of New York, an event which takes on for the villagers aspects of the second coming of Christ. He tells of the first successful strike by the sulphur miners of the interior, and of his visit to the mine-owner, a shifty and sinister character whose attitude is a mixture of that of a slave-owner in the Roman Empire and that of a Sicilian Chicago

**WORDS ARE STONES* by Carlo Levi. Trans. by Angus Davidson (Gollancz 16s.).
TO FEED THE HUNGRY by Danilo Dolci. Trans. by P. D. Cummins (MacGibbon & Kee, 30s.).
THE TEN PAINS OF DEATH by Gavin Maxwell (Longmans, 30s.).

gangster boss. He senses all around him the influence of the "non-existent" Mafia, and he describes the opposition to land reform, mentioning in particular the English-owned Duchy of Bronte (given to Nelson by the King of Naples and owned today by Nelson's English heir, who is named in the Italian edition, but not in the present volume). In the Italian edition we are told that the owner's agents have opposed agrarian reform "in all manners, legal and illegal", in the English edition this becomes: "naturally enough, the administration is making every possible effort to oppose land reform."

For centuries Sicily has been governed from abroad by a succession of foreign conquerors, and the periodic peasant revolts have been crushed by the feudal landowners with the aid of armies, armed police, the terrorism of the Mafia and the blessing of the Church. The peasants do not believe that the half-hearted governmental attempts at land reform introduced by the immediate post-war government, and given a certain impetus by the fear of unrest following the land seizures of 1948 and 1949, are genuine.

"... Between the peasant population and the foreign government there has always been an abyss or cleft; and it is here that the Mafia lies hidden. To reach the great expanses of the feudal estates, the villages of the interior, the land, the peasants, to get taxes paid, to squeeze out the fat of the land so necessary for distant governments and for the life of the nobles—for all this there have never been sufficient forces nor yet direct agreements; the whole life of the island has been left to its own devices..."

Or left rather to the autonomous powers of all the different forces which batten onto the poor, the rural guards, the land agents, the priests, the police, the excise officers, while the bandits who begin as symbols of the peasants' hopeless blind revolt, frequently end as the agents of the Mafia, terrorising the poor in the universal protection racket which is Sicily's social life. Levi's most telling pages are those describing the life and death of Salvatore Carnevale, a young peasant from one of West Sicily's rural slums who tried to organise a branch of the peasants' union. He was ambushed and murdered by the Mafia with "the following day the theft of forty hens for the traditional banquet." The investigat-

ing police put out the usual story of a private feud, but Salvatore Carnevale's mother, to the embarrassment of the authorities, insisted on giving evidence at the inquest, and Levi tells, through her own words, of her transformation from a doting and resigned mother into a fierce and implacable fighter for retribution and justice, not only for her dead son, but for the whole peasantry in whose struggle his death was one, often-repeated episode. In the commune of Corleone (16,000 inhabitants), one murder took place every nine days between 1945 and 1948. In the province of Palermo the Mafia murdered thirty-eight trade unionists between 1946 and 1956. *Volontà* reports that there were 12 Mafia murders in Western Sicily in September and October alone last year.

Gavin Maxwell went to Sicily to write the life of the adored bandit Giuliano (who joins the Paladins and Saracens in the figures on the painted carts), and did so magnificently in his book *God Protect*

Me From My Friends. Appalled and fascinated by what he had uncovered, he stayed in the fishing settlements around Castellamare del Golfo collecting people's stories, and adopting the same method of direct reporting as the Italian writers. In his pages people speak for themselves, not only the fishermen and shepherds, the thieves, peddlers and prostitutes of this vast underworld, but a Tuscan *carabiniere* who observes that "Here there's no co-operation between the peasants themselves—one would say that they all hate each other", a disillusioned schoolmaster, a priest who declares that "Fascism is dead, but its wisdom remains—whoever has Democratic papers works and whoever hasn't... well, it's up to him," a *mafioso* doctor who says "It's a mistake to give so many benefits to people of this sort—we'll end up by having decently bred people eating out of their hands," and a nun who refuses to take in the orphans

Continued on p. 4

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Town and Country

DEAR COMRADES,

Nicolas Walter seems to me to be attacking an "Aunt Sally" of his own construction. I have never met any of these 'pastoralist anarchists' after ten years in the movement. Where have they been hiding all this time? All the anarchists that I have ever met believe that town and country should balance each other. I've never encountered anyone who wanted to do away with towns, nor was this the desire of William Morris, who wanted to decentralise London, and break it up with belts of woodland and country, as one can read in "News from Nowhere". To desire to reduce the sprawl of towns is not the same as desiring to abolish them.

Nicolas Walter himself writes, "I think a limitation on scale essential. No single town should be too large, as London has been for fifty years." This is what most anarchists and near-anarchists have always believed. The trouble is though that London is not merely too large, it is still growing. Mr. Walter accuses me of writing "with my tongue in my cheek" that London will absorb Southern England within a century. All I can say is that he has never been in Southern England, or that he is blind. Everywhere you go you see new houses spreading, more and more fields being swallowed up. London spreads down from the North, Brighton comes up from the South, or spreads its tentacles along the coast to link up with other seaside towns. Intermediate villages and small towns also develop little subtopias of their own, as I saw from the train yesterday when travelling to Sussex on the Victoria-Uckfield line, which crosses a fairly remote part of the South.

I think perhaps Mr. Walter would be more inclined to agree with me if I wrote that "in a hundred years the whole of southern England will be one vast suburb". Athens was all very fine. It

was a small place. The modern town is a vast amorphous mass without a centre of any kind. The individual is swamped in it.

"Nature" is a "hurrah word" to Mr. Walter, not to me. It has sentimental associations, but that is something that cannot be helped, it is still the only available word in this context. During my childhood I was evacuated to the country, where I lived in conditions of barbarism and squalor on the level of the Ancient Britons, or not much above it. This was partly the fault of the war, but at any rate I shall never idealise country life. I hated it then, but subsequently I had a dose of life in subtopia. I did not hate it, it merely depressed me to an almost suicidal level. Which is worse, to hate something energetically or to lose all one's energy in a sort of dead, flat sense of pointlessness? In Devon and Wales, where I was dumped during the war, there were at least moors and mountains and woods, and vast empty beaches, deserted because of the war of course. In subtopia there is nothing but streets and streets of little houses, with an occasional recreation ground or belt of trees. In the country one could at least escape into the wild sometimes. In the suburb there was no escape.

With the development of electricity the technical necessity of the vast industrial town has been reduced. Things could be decentralised much more than they are being. This decentralising tendency should lead ideally to a lot of small towns, with a thriving communal life, emphatically *not* to a sort of wishy-washy sprawl, a poor man's garden city, a state of affairs that is neither town nor country but possesses the vices of both. (In subtopia there is no sense of space and surprise and possibility, yet, despite the vast crowd living there, one can be as lonely as in the heart of the hills).

A "natural" life, I am sorry Mr. Walter, if you want a better word you

must invent one for yourself, should be lived with the maximum opportunities for exercise of one's body in the fresh air. It should be lived with one's fellowmen, not in solitude. There should be plenty of space around one. Space is necessary for freedom. One of the reasons why modern society seems to be getting more and more authoritarian is that the population is increasing so fast. Vast crowds of people can no longer be left to manage their own affairs, their lives have to be increasingly regulated or chaos results. They get in each other's way, they tread on each other's toes. Authority has to step in more and more.

I feel strongly about this because I can see this process going on all round me. There is a great danger that the whole world will become a subtopia. This is really more of a menace than the H-Bomb, and there does not seem to be anything that can stop this trend, or any sign of a counter-current or counter-trend. Mr. Walter doesn't want subtopia any more than I do, but by creating the myth of the "pastoralist anarchist" he is doing his little bit to bring it into being.

Buxted, Sussex, Oct. 25th.

ARTHUR W. ULOTH.

Voting by Smell!

DEAR FRIENDS,

From Ernie Crosswell's letter (assuming that it got through the FREEDOM patent misprinting process unscathed) one might imagine that I said the Labour Party was absolutely splendid. But I didn't: in fact I agreed that FREEDOM's arguments were "more or less just", and I am fully aware that the cupboards of Transport House conceal a fine assortment of pretty smelly skeletons, some of the smelliest of which appear in the SWF pamphlet *How Labour Governed*.

I don't suffer from anosmia. Nor do I have "faith" in any party, which is

why I don't belong to any. I simply prefer to vote for the least smelly of them because I think a Government can at times do good (Health Service, Pensions) and be prevented from doing some evil (Suez, H-Bombs) by so-called democratic pressure.

There are some M.P.s who have done more good than harm—Silverman, Castle, Brockway, Jenkins, Nicolson, Hyde—and if my vote can help to strengthen them I will use it. Otherwise I won't. But I certainly won't forgo the only direct way I have of influencing my rulers. In the meantime I try to keep up personal pressure on my Labour friends and to smuggle anarchist pamphlets into the Transport House Bookshop. Every little helps.

Yours,

NICOLAS WALTER.

[*Not quite, in fact! E.C. reports that in the last paragraph of his letter he refers to "active members of the candidate's Party" and not "astute" as FREEDOM makes him say! We apologise to contributors who suffer at the hands of our proof readers. We are appealing to them to mend their ways, and give special attention to E.C.'s future contributions as well as Nicolas Walter's.—EDITORS.]

That One Vote!

DEAR FRIENDS,

Re Nicolas Walters' letter last week. Supposing I knew for certain that my one vote would tip the balance in favour of my local (L.P.) M.P., and also knew that this one M.P. would give the L.P. an absolute majority of one in Parliament. In other words, I know that my vote was going to be 100 per cent. 'effective'—am I justified, as a professed anarchist, in forcing half the population to pay up more of their hard-earned money to old age pensioners if they don't want to? To pay other people's doctor's bills, etc.? This is indeed a curious interpretation of "voluntary association of individuals"!

Mine, etc.,

London, N.14. GRAHAM CAREY.

Conversations in Sicily

Continued from p. 3

of Communists and "prays to God that he will make all Communists die."

Maxwell's stories of hatred, corruption, filth and hunger are relieved by his descriptions of the year's three main harvests of the olives, grapes and grain, celebrated by customs which must go back beyond even the earliest of the country's wave after wave of invaders, the Carthaginians and Greeks.

★

DOLCI'S book is a sociological enquiry. He says in his preface that it is meant to "pose a problem in order that it may be resolved". It is a "small contribution to the initial stages of a study on the unemployed in the province of Palermo":

"Its object is to shed light on the conditions under which the totally unemployed, the partially unemployed and the 'self-employed' (i.e. those who are carrying on some activity, legal or otherwise, which cannot be called work in the strict sense of the word) exist. . . . If by work we mean an activity which is of use, not only to the individual but to the whole community, then that of the executioner, the *feudatario* (owner of a feudal fief), the prostitute, certainly cannot be said to come within this category. The prostitute, however, does at least offer her own body, whereas the landowner merely lives on the labour of others. . . ."

He begins with a few pages of statistics, and follows this with about 250 pages of the personal stories of the 'witnesses', "none of them altered or touched up in any way", and concludes with the answers given to the following questions: When you are unemployed, how do you manage to live? Do you think it is God's will that you are unemployed? What do you think that the various political parties in Italy ought to do to get rid of unemployment? Is the ballot secret? What do you think you and each of us should do to get rid of unemployment?

His statistics are appalling enough. Forty-seven per cent. of the 4½ million Sicilians are destitute or semi-destitute. There is the highest infantile mortality in Europe. In one quarter of the city there are eight people to a room, four to a bed, less than half the children have ever been to school. The worst of Palermo's acres and acres of slums lies, appropriately between the Cathedral and the Palace of Justice. But what gives the book its impact in the mind of the reader are the testimonies which Dolci and his friends have gathered. These verbal autobiographies of jailbirds, pickpockets, hawkers, rag-collectors, organ-grinders,

procuresses, quack-doctors, magicians and *spicciaccende* (letter writers and form-fillers for the illiterate), remind the reader forcibly of the interviews which Henry Mayhew collected in early Victorian London, and the pathetic ignorance which some of the interviews reveal is like that of the forsaken children that Mayhew questioned. There are Sicilian children who have never seen a wheel and who see their first bed when they graduate to prison. There are adults who think that the sun is Jesus and the moon is the Virgin Mary, people who think that Mussolini still rules and that Russia is a little island of redskins.

Gandolfo, a shepherd of thirteen: If I could choose, I'd live amongst men, not animals.

Leonardo: I wouldn't. I'd rather stay with my flocks. I love my sheep.

Gandolfo: I've never heard of America. *Leonardo and Vincenzo*: We have, but we don't know what it is.

Gandolfo: I've heard tell of the Pope, too, but what sort of thing is it?

Another Vincenzo also preferred his animals. (He was interviewed in prison, having been sentenced to four years for picking two bunches of herbs in someone's field).

"I understand much more about cows and sheep and goats than I do about Christians. When I look after a cow properly, she pays me back, she gives me milk; I'm good to her and so she's good to me. But Christians aren't good to me; instead of helping me, they do me harm. I know what to do when I'm with animals, but with Christians—no. . . . I hardly ever saw my father—he was either away in the army or away in prison, and when they let him out, he wasn't allowed to leave the village. . . . I've never had any real friends except the lamb and the kid. . . ."

Rosario T. who like hundreds of others ekes out a living gathering frogs, snails and wild herbs for sale, tells of his feelings:

"While I'm watching the different creatures in the woods I often think they're no different from us. We all eat each other up—you do, I do. . . . I can't tell you how bad it made me feel the first time I took the scissors to a frog. But last year I killed 150 kilos of frogs. The rich who keep all their land and money for themselves, who never spare us a thought, and who let us starve to death—they ought to dream at night of a basket of heads—not frog's heads, but the heads of all the men and women they've killed—yes they ought to dream of all the eyes in all those faces watching and watching them. . . ."

Nicolo A., an unemployed man was seized by the police on suspicion of being concerned with banditry. In the

course of being tortured for a confession, his spine was fractured and he was crippled for life. He was then continually arrested for begging.

"It's not my fault I'm a beggar, it's yours," I said. "I can't even stand without my crutches. Give me a pension and I'll stop begging." "That's not a matter for the courts—you must apply to the government if you want a pension," they said. It would give the tourists a bad impression if they saw people begging in the Via Libertà, they said."

★

SALVATORE G. gives an account of the peasant land seizures:

"In 1947, when Fausto Gullo was Minister of Agriculture, and the peasants began to take possession of uncultivated or badly cultivated land, the occupation was carried out peacefully and the *carabinieri* came along to protect the *contadini* from the Mafia. The fiefs of Licca, Gibilcanna and Balatelli became co-operatives, and were worked collectively until 1952. The owner of these three fiefs immediately brought an action against the Peasants' Co-operative. In 1951, as he was unable to evict the peasants, he had a deed of gift drawn up under which fifteen persons were to hold two of the fiefs in perpetuity. By means of this deed of gift, he took the land away from the co-operatives, and so forced ninety-two men and their families to quit the estates.

"In 1950, we occupied the fief of S. Maria del Bosco. It took us just under a week. The first day was a real holiday; laughing and calling to one another, the peasants trooped out of their villages, men, women, girls, children, mothers carrying their babies, and joined forces with one another till they formed a procession a kilometre long. As soon as we set foot on the land, we set to work to clear it of stones. . . . and began to hoe. The land hasn't been cultivated for 60 years. The villagers from Bisacquino, Contessa Entellina, and Giuliana formed themselves into three separate groups, and the air resounded with the gay music of accordion and guitars—it was just like the feast-day of a patron saint. While we men hoed, boys and girls and women too, cleared away the stones. We sang as we worked, the children played together, and our banners which we'd fastened to the trees made a brave show of colour. Those who had bread shared it with those who had none—and many had none. Next day, we were joined by still more peasants. . . ."

On the third day, the alleged ring-leaders were arrested and the protesting crowds dispersed under threat of machine-gun fire. On the fourth day the village was surrounded by *carabinieri* and on the following day the crowds were fined on by the *carabinieri* and the

Celere (riot squads). 181 people were accused of rioting and given sentences varying from fifteen days to twenty-six months.

"Since 1950, we've not only ceased to advance, we've gone right back. Groups have sprung up in the villages whose purpose is to terrorise the peasants into voting for them by holding the threat of unemployment over their heads."

And Santo S. a sharecropper in another area who inspired his fellow villagers to resist the extortions of the landlord, succeeded for one year only in establishing the legal share of the crop. But now, "I'm too weak—I'm so utterly alone. . . . Time and again the sight of the police or the *carabiniere* threw them into such a panic that they went to the owner and said: 'It's Santo who's to blame—he pushes us on in spite of ourselves.'"

Educate, Organise, Emancipate. The old IWW slogan applies with tremendous force to the needs of the Sicilians. The 'movement', which in this context usually implies the Peasant Unions organised by the Communist or Socialist parties, means for the adherents more than a movement, it means a rebirth (the phrase used by one of Dolci's witnesses), giving men courage in the face of intimidation and the threat of murder, self-respect, and a hunger for education and co-operation. This comes out with tremendous force in the first of the testimonies, that of Gino O., the abandoned child pick-pocket who graduated from reformatory, prison and exile, to being secretary of the Agricultural Workers' Federation—and more prison. It emerges too from the testimony of Angelo P. (omitted from the English edition) whose eyes were opened by an anarchist fellow-prisoner to the world of literature and the urge to teach others. And it is illustrated in another testimony (also unhappily omitted from the English edition), that of Franco P., tractor-driver on the co-operative farm of Pina degli Albanesi:

"True, our town is poor. . . . but the people are not resigned to such a life, because they realise it is not just. For we have had sixty, seventy years of struggle in which we had a great teacher Nicola Barbato, whom the Mafia wanted to murder more than once. . . . We go on fighting. . . . They are taking away our land, they have massacred us at the Portella della Ginestra, they have arrested people and murdered Damiano Lo Greco, and nothing is left in Piana except eyes to weep with. This is the price we pay for being men."

Over the entrance to the quarter of Palermo known as the *pozzo della morte* are scrawled the words: 'You have heard of Siberia? Come and look at us.'

C.W.

Suffer, You Little Brats!

EVERY young babe-in-arms should be cooing with delight at the fact that the Roman Catholic Pax Conference has just passed resolutions "asking for more study of the moral issues involved in nuclear war" (*The Universe*, Oct. 23). One of the resolutions, to be put to the Jesuit General at the Ecumenical Council, asks for "intensive study of nuclear war" by theologians and discussion in Dominican and Jesuit publications. "In this way it is hoped that more theologians will be enabled to inform themselves of the issues at stake and be able to give a lead to priests and laymen now at a loss for information."

We should all applaud this progressive step. Of course we could have given them the information years ago if they had "only asked" but, who knows, they might, given time, find it out themselves. Rumour has it that the late Pope kicked himself to death for forgetting to ask Jesus about the problem when he appeared in a vision.

Another thing that came out of this Conference, held at Hawkesyard, Staffs., was the affirmation that every individual was duty bound to "inform his conscience" on the matter of war. This might not seem to be a very useful exercise since the late Pope said, at Xmas 1956, that "a Catholic citizen cannot invoke his own conscience in order to refuse to serve and fulfil those duties the law imposes"—he was defending the moral right of a Catholic nation to take "defensive precautions" (we call them H-bombs) and the duty of every Catholic to obey orders.

Archbishop Roberts S.J., who took a prominent part in the Pax proceedings, said that he had assured the Ecumenical Council commissioners that he did not suggest "authoritative pronouncements which might only disturb good faith, court rebellion or disobedience, break under the weight of vested interests where the whole national economy is geared to war"; all he wanted to do was to "Educate Catholic leaders in a sphere hitherto neglected. . . ."

Suffer Little Children?

Sufferin' Cats!

ERNIE CROSSWELL.

FOOTNOTE:—*The Universe* also carried the following short notice:

ARMY DEDICATED

The Irish Army has been dedicated to Our Lady in ceremonies at military churches all over the country.

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