

TURN YOUR BACK ON GOVERNMENTS AND CONSCIOUSLY—

Refuse to Vote!

WHY LEND SUPPORT TO YOUR OWN EXPLOITATION?

THE anarchist attitude of abstention from voting in elections is, if it is carried no further than that, a completely negative position. It is certain that more people will fail to record a vote in next week's General Election through sheer apathy and indifference than through thoughtful and reasoned conviction. The politicians tell us that to decline to participate in the Election is to abrogate the most elementary and precious rights and duties of citizenship.

Indeed, Mr. Woodrow Wyatt, giving "Advice to Canvassers", in last week's *Tribune* writes: "To that grim face that shuts tight on a sharp 'No, thank you', or 'We don't know', there is nothing that can be said. It hides a mind filled with invincible ignorance." This is, of course, partly an illustration of the fantastic self-importance of politicians, but it conceals a truth that we cannot ignore.

Unless we live solitary and self-sufficient lives, we are all members of society, contributory to it and dependent on its functionings. The Britain in which we live has taken its present shape through centuries of political and industrial evolution, and it is simply not true to say that life in "democratic" Britain has no advantages over life in "totalitarian" Russia or "plutocratic" America. To refrain from taking part in the system through which, ostensibly, our society functions is a serious matter with consequences which must not be ignored. Suppose that the majority of the electorate boycotted the coming election. It is just as likely that this action would be followed by a demagogic coup d'état as by a revolutionary upsurge of the people for the "replacement of the government of men by the administration of things." That is why the advice of the anarchists is not simply *Don't Vote!* but *Don't Vote, Act for Yourself!* To abstain from voting and to ignore the consequences is, from a social point of view, irresponsible, but if we are prepared to think and act for ourselves, voting is in itself an evasion of personal responsibility.

"We Must Be More Realistic"

We are often told that anarchism is highly desirable as an ultimate aim, but that at present we must be "realistic" and since we cannot abolish government next week, we must vote for the best possible government available. How will these people act? Perhaps they will vote Labour, because they feel that a Labour government will be most generous to the old and the unfortunate and more likely to give "fair shares" to all; perhaps, if they belong to the more comfortable sections of the community they will vote for the Conservatives in the belief that this will lead to less governmental interference in everybody's lives; or they might even do so because they think that a right-wing government will be more likely to provoke militancy amongst the productive workers and precipitate a

revolutionary situation—using the argument that things have got to get worse before they can get better; perhaps they will vote Liberal believing that that party really stands for the liberal virtues and that they really mean to abolish conscription, introduce home rule for Scotland and Wales, etc.; or perhaps they will vote Communist, in which case one can only assume that they are suffering from hypnosis of the intelligence and paralysis of the logical faculty. But whichever way they vote, they must realise that the party they vote for can do nothing at all about the central problems of our age, the problems of war, authority, and the use of raw materials and the land for satisfying human needs. They will all prepare for war; the party which talks most about peace, the Communists, merely want us to fight on a different side. They all believe in authority, for this is what they are all seeking; they

(Continued on page 4)



OUR ELECTION ADDRESS

To All Those About to Vote:

Dear Sir or Madam,

No doubt, by the time you read this you will be either in a state of exasperation or in one of stunned apathy. You will have been bombarded with words, printed and verbal, from candidates and canvassers, until you are beginning to think that silence is indeed golden, and illiteracy, like ignorance, may well be bliss!

Equally without doubt, if you are a rational being, you will have been appalled at the waste of energy and paper which has resulted from the frantic efforts of political people to acquaint you of the benefits of full employment, the iniquity of controls, the upsurge of liberalism, or how everything would be wonderful if only Britain would trade with Russia. If you are particularly unlucky, you may even have been subjected as well to the attentions of independent job-seekers, fascists, or members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

How tired you must be of it all! And how right you are, for certainly once every five years is far too often to be treated to all this nonsense. For you mustn't think that your apathy is a sign of lack of civil responsibility; on the contrary, it is a sign of commonsense. And instead of compelling yourself to go round to the polls, because "it's the right thing to do", why not sit at home and think about how little politicians and leaders can really do for us?

For it is little enough, isn't it? In spite of all their fine promises, when it really comes down to it, what can any of them—Labour, Conservative, Liberal, Communist—do for us that we could not do much better if we were free to do it for ourselves? All that can be said for any government is that it organises and directs what we actually do—and directs it for ends with which none of us are ever satisfied, for who has ever been satisfied with any government? And what are the ends to which governments direct our energies? They say the end is our own well-being, but it nearly always seems to be a new war doesn't it? They say they want to defend our freedom, but all the time they seem to be taking our freedom away, and controlling our lives more completely themselves. They say they know what is best for us, but it is small consolation when we are being conscripted, directed, or taxed up to the eyebrows, to be asked to believe "it is for your own good".

Nor can we take seriously the mock fight between the political parties, for the differences between them are rapidly disappearing and the struggle is descending to the level of dogs

fighting over a bone. Unfortunately, we are the bone, and whichever side wins, we shall be buried for the next five years, to be dug up in time for the next dog-fight. And we are supposed to get enthusiastic over such issues as false teeth, a larger petrol ration, or vague promises of houses which are never built, while over us hangs the shadow of atomic warfare, which will be an ever-present threat as long as governments exist.

No, let us have no illusions. All the hullabaloo and mud-slinging and touting for votes simply covers up the opportunism of the job-seekers, and the futility of the whole silly business. How can one man who does not even live in your neighbourhood and does not know your needs or potentialities, represent you and thousands of your neighbours (all with different needs and potentialities) in a parliament which cannot be concerned with your welfare but only with abstractions like "the Nation", "the State", etc.?

They will all offer you bribes, but none of them will tell you the truth: that the real issues to-day are those of the authoritarian state against your individual liberty, of universal militarism against your right to refuse to support war, of inhuman centralisation against responsible de-centralisation, of financial tyranny against your right to be economically free, of censorship against cultural freedom.

All that you do when you cast a vote is to keep the old system going—you perpetuate your own irresponsibility for your own life. The most democratic thing about it is that thereby you choose which master you will serve—but your servitude is the same whichever master you choose.

The road to freedom and equality does not take us through the ballot box; it lies through our taking responsibility for our own destiny, and through our striving, in our own personal lives here and now, to throw off the shackles of authority and to seek our humanity in co-operation with our fellow men and women throughout the world. The best advice then, that can be given to those about to vote is: *Don't do it!* Instead, take every direct means at your disposal to by-pass politics and the stupid economic system politicians support; take back your dignity as a human being and take back your responsibility for your environment and your life.

No leader will give us freedom—that we must earn by our own efforts!

The above is available as a leaflet (1/- per 100) from
Union of Anarchist Groups, 27 Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1

2 Functions & Dangers of

THE POLITICAL MYTH

IN the discussion of political campaigns attention is usually focussed on the content of propaganda utterances. Much less attention is paid to the forms in which the propaganda is presented, to the nature of the mechanisms by which the politician appeals to his public. Yet this is a field in which the study of form and mechanism are all-important. For the politician can afford to be insincere in the content of his propaganda, he can make promises he has no intention or means of fulfilling, speak in defence of a freedom he intends to destroy, offer a peace he wishes to break at the earliest possible moment, but he can do this only if he retains a sufficient technique of appealing to the rational and the even more powerful irrational elements in human thought. To lose this faculty means in most cases the doom of a politician. Only if he is a man whose aspirations conform in a striking way with those of the people, will he outlive a lack of ability in the craft of propaganda. And he will then succeed because he really has that community of interests with his supporters which most politicians seek to simulate.

The vast majority of politicians succeed by methods which involve a hidden distortion of the truth in their attempt to gain support by appealing to the most widespread popular desires. In other words, they win success by some kind of verbal fraud. Where such a condition exists, as it almost invariably does, where a "gift of the gab" rather than any genuine sympathy for the needs and aspirations of his electors is the means by which a party boss reaches his position, it is not surprising that so often in modern life the word *politics* should have become almost synonymous with *corruption* and the word *propaganda* with *lies*.

Clearly, the only way people can be freed from the power of the word and concept juggling politician is by the arduous process of growing understanding and independence of thought. It is the ignorant and mentally immature who are the principal victims of the political propagandist, as they are of the commercial advertiser. One of the most accomplished masters of propaganda in our age, the late Adolf Hitler, consistently emphasised the fruitfulness of the appeal which is based on a low intellectual level, as when he said in *Mein Kampf*:

"All propaganda must be popular, and its intellectual level must be in accordance with the intelligence of the greatest dulleard among those at whom it is directed. Thus the greater the numbers of those at whom it is directed the lower will be its level. But if its object is to draw a whole people within its range, no precautions to avoid too high an intellectual level can be excessive."

Hitler, like Machiavelli, revealed the secrets of his trade with an open cynicism. But, because such admissions have rarely been made, we should not imagine that other politicians have neglected to practice the precepts which Hitler discussed openly. On the contrary, almost every successful party leader, whether he comes from the left, the centre or the right, has been helped on his way to power by the free use of propaganda whose intention is not to expose the truth, but merely to convince men of his worthiness, and this propaganda has always been most successful when it has been conducted at the most elementary and irrational level.

Propaganda uses almost every device the modern publicist and psychologist have placed at its service, and takes a surprising variety of forms, even if we ignore the closely related craft of commercial advertising. In its most elaborate forms it involves the creation of myths regarding the future and of legends regarding the past, by which the findings of the historian and the social scientist are

distorted to fit in with the requirements of the party which appropriates them. Of such manifestations I have already written elsewhere (in the *Writer and Politics*) but in the present notes I am concerned with a much more simplified and much more widely used propaganda device, the slogan.

The word *slogan* meant originally a Highland war-cry, and in a sense this remains a fair approximation to its significance in our day. For what we mean by a slogan is in fact a striking phrase in which is condensed an aspect of the overt programme of a political group, and which can be used as a rallying cry for the party's own members, or, more often as a simple and vivid means of transmitting to outsiders the essence of its promises. Sometimes, also, and particularly when used by governments in a time of crisis, slogans take the form of urges to action or indirect commands. But always, whatever may be their use, the essence of slogans lies in their simplicity, brevity and condensation. And, for this reason, another of their characteristics is superficiality. Even if a man who invents a slogan desires to express therein what he honestly believes, he can only present its most vague and generalised form, for it is clearly impossible to express a philosophy of life, or, for that matter, a practical means of curing unemployment, in a single phrase. So the slogan writer composes a group of words which will strike the reader's eye, and which, in striving to be arresting, he must manipulate until it achieves a certain simple pattern attractive to the unthinking mind. But the most striking ten words to describe a policy need not be the most accurate, and, in consequence, the formal needs of propaganda imply a distortion which must be superimposed on the loss of meaning already involved in the process of simplification.

All this so far presupposes that the composer of slogans is really concerned to present what he conceives to be the truth in the best possible way. But, in fact, most politicians are concerned mainly to gain popular support for their own accession to power, and, in order to achieve this support, they are ready to invent slogans, and even whole false programmes and policies, solely in order to convince the populace, or some particularly important section thereof, of their own worthiness. In such a situation, a slogan assumes a totally new significance. It is no longer a simplification of a party's real intentions, but a phrase which its originators calculate will make an appeal to popular sentiment, irrespective of its relevance to any concrete intentions of the group it represents. Thus it in fact becomes, in its most successful form, a symbol of the most pressing desires and needs of the masses, behind which a party, pursuing its own ends, moves forward to power.

Slogans have reached their most effective, and most distorted forms during the past century and, particularly, since the rise of totalitarian politics. Slogans, indeed, have existed since classical antiquity, but in past ages they usually had some direct reference to the subject with which they were connected. For instance, there is Cato's celebrated slogan, "Carthage must be destroyed." This really did represent Cato's opinion and his political programme, and its main effectiveness lay in its boldness and the relentless assiduity with which its creator repeated it until he had turned it into reality. But it had already that characteristic of simplification by which the mind is lulled to the full meaning of the whole complex of circumstances which underlie it. "Carthage" becomes an abstraction, and the people who hear this

phrase think of a formless enemy rather than of a concrete city filled with men and women who will be destroyed with the city or who will suffer vastly from its destruction. It is, of course, possible that few of the Romans of Cato's time, would have been moved greatly by pity, but the way in which Cato phrased his appeal certainly helped to prevent their feeling this—to him—un-Roman emotion.

Generally speaking, however, slogans, at least as we know them, were little used in the ancient or the medieval world. The intensive cultivation of propaganda comes only when the masses of the people move into historical significance, and in a world where emperors, kings and narrow oligarchies hold sway it exists only in the most rudimentary forms. In the medieval world the most commonly used slogans adhered closely to the original definition, for they were rallying cries of the supporters of kingly or aristocratic parties and were usually concerned with personal loyalties rather than with political policies. It was only here and there, where some rudimentary democracy existed, as in Rome or Athens or the Italian city states, that genuine political slogans appeared, and even these were rarely more developed than that of Cato.

It was at the close of the Middle Ages that really popular movements began to arise, in the peasant revolts and the radical religious sects. And it is from this period that we can trace the most important early growth of slogans of the

modern type, based on a popular grasp of simple social ideals and an increasingly conscious demand among the populace for improvements in their conditions of life. To the English peasant insurrections of the 14th century belongs that celebrated and most effective slogan:

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

This couplet contains, firstly, a condensed myth of a Golden Age of equality, secondly, an implied reference to the present age of inequality which has departed from the simplicity of the Golden Age, and, thirdly, a suggestion that the people should give thought to this weighty matter. On the merely technical plane it was successful, partly because of its relation to familiar Biblical mythology, partly because, by reference to such concrete occupations as delving and spinning, it bore a direct relation to the daily lives of the people who heard it, and partly because, in an age when people were accustomed to rhymed proverbs and other jingles, it had a pleasant sound and was easy on the tongue.

This was not merely one of the most effective slogans, in relation to its time, that has ever been invented; it was also one of the most innocuous since, in a simple society, it could be taken as a fair and reasonably accurate generalisation of the issue it represented, that of replacing feudalism by a more equitable social order. There is no doubt that the

peasant movement was motivated by an extremely radical egalitarian spirit, and that such leaders as John Ball sincerely hoped to end the glaring class distinctions of their age.

It was during the ensuing centuries that politicians and demagogues began to discover the value of slogans in appealing to the feelings of the lowest common denominator in society, to those irrational impulses which are most evident when people are gathered in the mass. Hence the term "mob orators", which was given at a relatively early time to such experts. A prominent eighteenth century example is that of Lord George Gordon, who raised opposition to a more tolerant policy towards Roman Catholics by using the slogan "No Popery", under which the celebrated riots of 1780 were carried out in London, resulting in a great deal of unnecessary violence and destruction. Here, whether intentionally or not, the slogan forms a clear distortion of the actual situation, for in the popular mind it evoked a memory of the days, as recently as the Jacobite rising of 1745, when there seemed a real danger of Catholic domination of England, and it was this association which underlay the hysteria inspiring the riots. In fact, however, no such danger existed in 1780, and the issue at stake was merely the granting of civil rights to a substantial minority of the community.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.
(To be continued)

Pacifist Blind Spots

REBUILDING BRITAIN by
Wilfred Wellock. (Hallmark,
1/-)

PEACE OR PARTY by Frank
Hancock. (Peace News, 2d.)

THESE pamphlets are both well worth reading, for each of them contains its proportion of sound argument, and they do help to illuminate certain important aspects of the relationship between war and politics. But they both reach conclusions which seem clearly at variance with the evidence they have accumulated and which appear to illustrate very aptly the kind of fear to draw logical conclusions which still seems to be a failing of the pacifist movement in general.

Wilfred Wellock sets out to discuss the relationship between war and a form of economy based on the traditional capitalist ideas of international trade. He shows how the present efforts of the British government to find its salvation in the expansion of overseas markets will eventually lead only to greater crises and will probably have its end in war. And he puts forward a very eloquent plea for an attitude to life based on the fulfilment of human potentialities, which, he believes, can best be achieved through a decentralised society, regionally integrated so far as production is concerned, and providing for a qualitative expansion of living rather than a quantitative expansion of production. So far, so good. It is when we come to the achievement of this happy state that the pamphlet tails off into nothingness. For Wellock seems to think that this change of direction can in fact be taken by a British government that would lead the world to sanity. True, he does say that a government *alone* could not succeed, but surely the very qualities which he demands of the people, vocation, community, co-operation, etc., are precisely those that are opposite to the idea of government. A communal and co-operative free society has to be wholly so; there is no place for the state in the same pattern of development, and, in fact, if the result Wellock hopes to see is to be achieved at all, it will be done by the people in spite of and in opposition to their governments.

In *Peace or Party*, Frank Hancock gives an interesting analysis of the way in which the Labour Party and its leaders have consistently betrayed the anti-militarist sentiments which they voiced during the period between the two wars. The text is documented by apt quotations, and it is interesting to be reminded that in 1925 Ernest Bevin said: "We must teach our children that resistance to war is more glorious than to take part in it," and that as recently as 1938 the present Prime Minister (Attlee) warned that: "The more you pile up armaments the more unsafe the world becomes."

One would think that these lessons would make such pacifists as Frank Hancock draw the obvious conclusion, that the exigencies of political power draw the politician inevitably into the vicious spiral of violence; the state only lives by physical power, and it was not accidental that George Lansbury was leader of the Party only at the time when it was farthest from authority. But the author of this pamphlet advocates that pacifists make another fling at politics, under the banner of a certain No More War Candidates Committee, which tries to reconcile the opposites of a governmentally planned economy and a renunciation of militarism and imperialism. In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man may indeed be better off, but he can still fall into the precipice on to which his wall-eye looks out, and this seems like being the fate of people who hope to end war by means of the state.



THE DIPLOMAT by James
Aldridge. (Bodley Head,
12/6)

THIS very long and at times repetitive and tedious novel might be called a study in social anthropology, in which category it is an interesting and even valuable document. Novels about 'diplomacy' invariably go all wrong: in the statement of the political problems dealt with, and in the analyses and presentation of the character of the diplomats involved in them. But not so *The Diplomat*. This author really knows what he is writing about. The problem is the Azerbaijan 'incident' of 1946, in which the U.S.S.R. and Britain (and, of course, the Azerbaijanis!) were involved. The principal British diplomat (sent on special

mission to deal with it) is one of the Foreign Office Old Stuffed Shirt Brigade, and he has naively chosen as his assistant a young geologist, an expert on Persia who knows nothing about the art and purposes of 'diplomacy', views all problems through the objective eyes of the scientist, and is an honest man whose 'heart is in the right place'. There is also, to be sure, a beautiful, brilliant and exasperating Embassy socialite lady. The essence of the novel is the clash between the struggling, honest point of view of the young assistant, who knows and loves the Persians and Azerbaijanis, and would like them to have a decent deal, and the pre-arranged policy which the professional diplomat has been sent to implement. No other novel about diplomacy so well shows how a diplomatic 'case' is made, how the brief is compiled, how the whole fake is put across. Those who are not aware of the utter amorality and 'unscrupulosity' of the diplomatic milieu may think that this book is a little far-fetched even for a book dealing with diplomacy. But assurance can be given that, what James Aldridge writes, is close to the bone.

C.D.

The Power of the Films

THE legal victory of Metro-Goldwyn Mayer over Miss Arnot Robertson is a sinister one. Three and a half years ago, it may be remembered, this company wrote to the B.B.C. complaining about Miss Robertson's broadcast reviews of their films, refusing to invite her to attend the press shows of their future releases, and asking the B.B.C. to co-operate by restraining her from reviewing them. The B.B.C., to their credit, refused to place restraints upon the freedom of their critic, and Miss Arnot Robertson issued a writ against M.G.M. for libel and slander. The jury awarded her £1,000 for libel and £500 for slander, and the judge agreed with their decision. In 1948 the Court of Appeal set aside this decision, and the House of Lords last week upheld the Appeal Court's findings.

Now this sort of thing is regrettable enough at the best of times, for critics ought to have a kind of privilege and there is something unattractive in touchiness about criticism. Again, the idea that all are equal before the law becomes quite obviously the absurdity it really is when an individual is pitted against a vast company for whom £1,500 damages is a trifling figure.

But the matter goes deeper than this. It is notorious that films in general are the most appalling drive, and the few films of quality that are made by no means make up for the prevailing low quality. Apart from being a tiny fraction of the total output, they seldom achieve general showings outside certain "cultural" cinemas. Now a reviewer cannot confine himself to this tiny minority of films; he must deal with the main stream of films, and if he has any pretensions to taste and a regard for the truth, he can only state the fact that they are in the main simply drivelling. A film company can say that this is not criticism, but it does not alter the fact. Obviously, the future quality of films depends on informed and

clear criticism, and a critic is shirking his responsibilities if he discusses rubbishy films "on their merits", instead of writing them off as—rubbish.

Yet when a critic begins to do just this and the audience is as large as the B.B.C.'s the companies show concern for their pockets—but none at all for the future quality of films. The Arnot Robertson decision may be good law, but it is a retrograde step in the struggle for freedom of criticism, and also for the future of films. Indeed, the reactions of many who had followed the case must have been, "so much the worse for the law".

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FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

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Your Dreams and My Dreams are Human

THE other evening a canvasser called to persuade me to vote for the local Liberal candidate. Because he was obviously a very sincere young man and was not offering me liberalism as a hawk trying to sell me a broom or a tin of floor polish, I engaged him in conversation, during the course of which, I pointed out that I was an anarchist. Far from beating a hasty retreat, he was much interested, and though by now he realised that from the vote-catching point of view he was wasting his time (I had warned him in any case right from the start), he continued the discussion, ending up by saying that he agreed that governments created more problems than they solved and that Anarchism was the answer. But there were not enough anarchists; until there were, well, one had to have governments.

★

Now, I think one of the probable reasons why the anarchist movement grows so slowly numerically, is that there are thousands of young people like that canvasser who would recognise the rightness of the anarchist philosophy but who feel that by accepting it as well, they will cease to be in a position to influence the present course of events. Many of them give all their spare time to political parties which they hope to infuse with their own idealism and then, by helping their party to power, to influence the country. What actually happens in the end is that the young man either abandons all political activity in disgust and joins the ranks of the 30-40% of the electorate who do not vote or, if he can stomach the compromises and hypocrisy of political life, succeeds in climbing the political ladder (via his trade union branch, party branch, or professional association) by which time he has left behind and forgotten all the ideals he had when as an enthusiastic canvasser he knocked on your door at election time to win another vote for his party.

What, then, is the case for anarchists refusing to vote? If all people took my canvasser friend's line then

THROUGH THE PRESS

NO REGRETS

In the sombre wars of modern democracy, chivalry finds no place. Dull butcheries on a gigantic scale and mass effects overwhelm all detached sentiment. Still, I do not regret or retract the tribute I paid to Rommel, unfashionable though it was judged.

—Winston Churchill in *Daily Telegraph*, 6/2/50.

FOOD FACTS

People who are under the impression that Britain cannot produce sufficient food should read Sir George Stapledon's book, *Make Fruitful The Land*; it is stated on page 28, "we have 16½ million acres of land in a more or less neglected condition and much of it absolutely derelict: every single acre of this area is capable of radical improvement." The acres are all there, but the workers are needed to cultivate the soil.

The American statesman who alleges that Britain can only feed 25 million of its population would do well to scrutinise Lord Northbourne's book, *Look to the Land*, page 114: "We are perhaps favoured above all nations in that we have a soil and climate unequalled in the world for its combination of richness and variety." The answer, then, to the question as to whether Britain could be self-supporting in food is an emphatic "Yes".

Picture Post, 4/2/50.

THE VICAR'S "SLUM MIND"

From the pulpit, the Rev. E. G. Thorp, Vicar of Dore, near Sheffield, yesterday gave these opinions:

No political party, no matter how clever, could abolish the slum mind. The Socialists were creating a race of parasites.

If returned, they would start to control the Church.

If they offered clergymen £700 a year, 90 per cent. would worship them.

News Chronicle, 6/2/50.

there would never be an alternative to government. If one is convinced that the anarchist idea is the alternative to government, then it seems to me that whether anarchism can be put into operation now or in a thousand years has no bearing on my decision to accept the anarchist ideas. For the very fact of coming to the conclusion that government is a social evil; that so long as there are governments there will be strife, injustice, nationalism, and no real freedom, is enough to convince me that to support government is wrong, and to attempt to reform it, a waste of time.

★

It is significant that none of the local candidates have promised freedom when trying to persuade me to vote for them. The Communist, it is true, does include something on the subject of strengthening "democratic rights" and if he is given the power declares he will fight for "the banning of all Fascist organisations". Quite apart from the ability of the Communists to interpret the word "Fascist" to include everyone except Party members, the fact of "banning" an organisation is itself undemocratic as the Communists themselves so rightly point out when they are the subject of the "banning". No, all that the parties offer me as an inducement to vote for them are promises of improved material conditions and in return for these promises (let us assume that they are concrete realities) I am expected to sign away my individuality, my right to life my live my way, my whole sense of individual responsibility. This is a price which I am not prepared to pay even to exercise my "right" to vote.

We are also told that voting, besides being a right, is also a duty. And the argument is often used that by not voting we are helping reactionaries to get into power. This is an old red-herring, dragged out on every occasion where it is a question of choosing between two evils. Even assuming that Labour is not as bad as Tory, the fact remains that neither party in power will bring about the society that every ordinary man and woman dreams of. For the world people dream of is one in which wars will no longer be a life-long threat to them and their children; insecurity will no longer haunt their minds; human pettiness, jealousy and injustices will no longer exist to embitter their relations; a lifetime which no longer spent doing work which they hate or which bores them; a world in which they will no longer be told continually what is good or bad for them. For governments, of whatever colour, think in terms of manpower, production, profits, laws and Acts of Parliament. And behind them all, seeing that the Machine operates efficiently: Force.

Your dreams and my dreams are human, not statistics or cash columns or documents with impressive seals. They can only be realised by our own efforts (once we free ourselves from the effects of the daily Press and the political slogans and start to dream). We know what we want as no smooth-tongued political leaders can possibly know.

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And the anarchist argument is that once an individual has mentally freed himself from the idea of Government, the first positive step has been made towards the realisation of his dreams. It is a difficult step for some to take, because obviously it involves the acceptance of

personal responsibility and that is the last thing Governments encourage; it involves the principle of doing unto others as you would they should do unto you when the others very often do not share that principle. Yet if your values are not measured in terms of income, position and the supremacy of force, there is a satisfaction in behaving towards your neighbour in a way which you feel within you to be the right way. It is only when one behaves decently oneself that one can expect similar behaviour in others. I always suspect those people who have a low opinion of their fellow-beings.

All I have said, let me hasten to add, has nothing to do with religion. All I am trying to suggest is that life will be simpler and happier when the present conflict in men's lives is resolved. This Jekyll and Hyde existence, this conflict, is between what one knows deep down is right or wrong and what an irrational respect for the infallibility of authority (government) leads one to accept as right or wrong.

For no man or woman who is prepared to support a "just war" can morally oppose the hydrogen bomb, bacterial warfare, atrocities or even plain murder. No man who supports the idea of "my country, right or wrong" can morally oppose genocide, gas chambers and concentration camps. No person who believes in the profit system and property rights can morally oppose exploitation, starvation, unemployment and destitution.

And people attempt to resolve this conflict by shifting the responsibility to "superior brains", "after all we don't know the true facts", etc. And atom bombs, conscription, imprisonment without trial and Means Tests, from being wrong become right. But it is only a relative "right" which in the long run is as wrong as ever it was.

The conscious refusal to vote in the coming elections, then, is a manifestation of one's determination to be free to organise one's own life. If we put our lives in the hands of politicians we are just pawns, to be used and sacrificed, dehumanised and demoralised, in the game of power politics and in the interests of strategy. By refusing to be "used" our road may appear more difficult and often be very uncomfortable. But how much fuller and purposeful as well!

V.R.

Where do Libertarians Stand?

IT may seem very naive to raise the question of voting for politicians, whether left or right, in an Anarchist paper. Most individuals fully accepting the Libertarian position know full well the implications of voting in the various forms of government, no matter how democratic their Election Manifestos appear to be. But, in spite of this, it is a subject worthy of continued attention, because it goes to the roots of Anarchist philosophy.

When this Election is in full swing there will be many workers whose real views add up to a Libertarian conception of society, but who will be influenced to vote for one of the parties on the left. They may feel that to withhold a vote against Tory reaction may be escapist and immoral. They are not clear, entirely, on the position of Centralised Authority. Whether the Communist, Labour, or other parties take over the State, it still remains a State, and as such, is a weapon for the suppression of the ordinary individual if he questions the Authority of those in power.

Recently, a worker made the remark to the writer, that, "you anarchists have the best of both worlds: you can condemn all parties because you don't have to enter the election combat. You owe no allegiance to anyone, so you can tear into everyone and everything. You point to the irresponsibility of voting in politicians to State positions, but what is your concrete answer to this issue? We admit the philosophical points against Centralised leadership, but what about the realities of life TO-DAY? Anyhow, you're not strong enough to do anything about it!" That seemed a fair criticism, worth some attention, since it must have sprung from a mind considering the problem beneath the surface. How could this be answered? The answer is with the worker himself. Delegating his vote to another proved his lack of confidence, both in himself and in his class. This particular worker was going to vote Labour; if there had been a Communist candidate in his constituency he would have been supporting him. Surely this is proof of irresponsibility, no matter how we appreciate the problems of such a worker in a modern, industrial society. While it might be better to have a Labour Government directing the State's affairs, than the complete reaction of Toryism or the Police State of the Communists, it must be obvious to the average Libertarian that to vote for ANY of these people means

a negation of his whole philosophy and convictions. If you preach non-voting for four years, and then face the fifth year with a spineless declaration of a vote for "the lesser evil", then it were best to admit our critical worker as correct in his analysis of Libertarian ideas, and to keep them within the cosy lounge of the house and the pub on the corner. If we vote in person when we write and speak against it in fact, we are no better than the political mountebanks we condemn.

See Through It!

As Libertarians, many of us have made the error of thinking the majority of workers understand the manoeuvres and scheming of the politicians. While many workers do see through the face of sending a political candidate to a Centralised Seat of Authority, where decisions are made quite contrary to their real needs and aspirations, they do not relate this to their own lack of intelligence and unity in failing to organise and equip

themselves for Syndicalist control in industry and decentralised, communal living in a free society.

The position, then, for Libertarians is to see clearly the whole ramifications of the State apparatus and to reject absolutely the use of the vote to maintain and propagate its Authority. What measures can be taken at any Election to explain methods of opposing the politicians is another matter, but to secure the help of workers, definite ideas of exposing Authoritarian leadership—whether mild or ruthless—must be adopted in practice, and not merely in theory. All Libertarians should attend Election meetings; they should ask questions on the dynamic issues of Peace, Freedom, Food and Shelter; they should not be put off by pretty, political showmanship, but in quiet—if possible—persistent mood, press home the real truths of life for the ordinary folks of ALL countries to-day.

Possibly of Some Use!

To the writer, it seems that our task in the Anarchist Movement at the moment is to encourage people to think and to reject the limited ideologies of Communist, Fascist or Democratic Parties; to infuse them with new confidence in their own abilities; to enlighten them in National and International political and financial manoeuvres, and in doing this, show that the ordinary people over the whole earth have nothing in common with this scheming. At all Election meetings, where time and numbers allow, we should be raising all these points to the various audiences and not least to the Labour and Communist ones!

Whether all this answers the title-heading, "Where do Libertarians stand?" is doubtful, because no individual can wrap up Anarchist teachings in a single article. The whole point, seems to be, in at least trying to arouse the Libertarian Movement, in the broadest sense, to a knowledge of their opportunity at Election times in making more converts to the cause of real freedom and social awareness. If this Election could produce a good increase in readers of *Freedom* and a further increase in numbers of people really interested in Anarchism as a practical answer to their individual problems, then we might be able to even grant that this Election was of some use to a section of the community.

J. H. MOORHOUSE.

ANARCHISM

FOR those readers who may be new to the ideas of Anarchism, we offer the following very brief summary of its main tenets, pointing out that the word "Anarchy" does not mean "chaos", but simply "without government".

Anarchists Oppose:

CAPITALISM: i.e., the economic system wherein ownership or control of the means of production is in the hands of the few—whether private ownership or a nationalised board—and the majority are employed merely as wage-slaves, and the motive for production is not the need of the community, but profit.

NATIONALISM: the natural outcome of patriotism, both irrational creeds which divide peoples against each other and make them easy prey for

MILITARISM: the cult of the glorification of regimentation and imposed discipline, especially through the armed forces, the main function of which is to breed obedience to authority and preparation for

WAR: it is useless to imagine that peace can be preserved by preparation for war, or that the total wars of modern times can be either just or justified. War is a permanent feature of governmental, capitalist society, and will not disappear until that form of society disappears.

THE STATE: which is the permanent structure of authority over the community, and wields its power through the armed forces, the police, the legal and prison systems, the various ministries of government, and co-operates with the Church in denial of mental, physical and material freedom.

Anarchists Propose:

FREE ACCESS for all to the means of production and distribution. Industry should be organised on the basis of equality for all concerned in it, through

WORKERS' CONTROL, and the guiding principle should be: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

FREE CONSUMPTION, resulting from the abolition of money and the wages system (by the use of which workers are robbed of the fruits of their labour) should be regarded as the right of all—unconditionally. Modern technology should be applied to the problems of satisfying the needs of the community and not be harnessed to destructive ends.

PEACE can only be achieved by the creation of a real INTERNATIONALISM of outlook by the peoples of the world, overriding national boundaries and abolishing their national States. This entails

SOCIAL REVOLUTION, which should produce violence only if national states use force to defend the old order of society which is so obviously suicidal. This revolution can only be brought about by the direct action of those who wish it; the power structure of society cannot be altered by giving power to different individuals in the vain hope of their remaining uncorrupted.

THE FREE SOCIETY, or co-operative commonwealth; i.e., that form of society based upon liberty and justice and incorporating the principles outlined above. Municipal affairs organised through local communes: no centralised authority, no law. With the abolition of private property and compulsive morality, no criminals. Freedom.

Government Campaign Against Doukhobors

WE learn that M. Verigin and J. Podovnikoff of the Hilliers Community of Doukhobors (described by George Woodcock in *Freedom* for 29/10/49), and John Lebedoff of the Sons of Freedom Commune at Krestova, have been arrested as part of an anti-Doukhobor drive by the British Columbia Government.

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"I KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR JOB THAN YOU DO"

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON

Representative Government & Elections

A READER of my fulminations in the last issue, against the gang of aldermen, magistrates, M.P.s and the rest of the gentry considered to be capable of ruling the rest of the community, asks me if I do not believe that they at least think they do good according to their lights. I certainly used the term "dogooders" and that is not the least of my objections to all those whose civic lights are most certainly due to be snuffed out. One expects the rising capitalist to sand the sugar, after all, but when in the course of time he rises in the Lords to deplore un-Christian materialism in the working-classes it ceases to be funny. One can imagine a man who has spent years of his life sending boys to prison defending this terrible record by the excuse that he wanted to protect property, but how can one take it seriously when he boasts that he has devoted his life to juvenile welfare? He may think that their real interest lies not with being let off but with being punished, identifying his own interest with that of the general public just as does the pontifical peer orating on materialism. Their ideas of doing good are bound up inextricably with the capitalist system, and all the forms of law and punishment must inevitably be bound up with maintenance of the class-divided system.

Common Ground

OUT of election time nobody seriously denies the anarchistic views about parliamentarism, and everybody knows it is only one more successful racket which has been incorporated into the State machinery just as the many feudal relics that clutter it up, to the advantage of various titled odd-job men from the Keeper of the King's Bedchamber outwards. However, when election time approaches, grave doubts afflict the electorate. Like children at a Wild West Show the excitement gets a bit too much for them. Hearing the shouting and the turmoil and the vilification and the downright scandal, they cannot settle themselves down to the belief that it is only a sham fight. Why the posters and the window cards and loud-speaker vans? Nobody is going to change a serious opinion held

for many years merely because somebody says "Vote for Lowsbury-Goodby" in a loud voice. Such electioneering is merely to whip up excitement and persuade the public into believing something vital is at stake. How can the poor man-in-the-street maintain his usual contempt for politics and politicians when the Press scorchers its pages with verbal duels of the opposing sides?

It is, however, to ignore the whole lesson of events if one imagines that people attack each other less because they are closer akin. In point of fact, "the heretic is always considered worse than the infidel" as is certainly seen in the case of religion. A Bengali who came to live in Belfast would be hard put to it to discover why the Christians there hated each other so bitterly whereas he could live in peace with Catholic and Protestant alike; but imagine him living peacefully in Calcutta while Moslems and Hindus could still lift sticks and stones! The Belgians, the Finns, the Armenians, the Mexicans and the Irish will each relate for indisputable reasons the crimes of one of the Great Powers, but in every case it happens to be the one which is their nearest neighbour. The more they are the same, the more is their fury at their differences.

The Russian Empire Issue

IN certain countries of the world electoral activity has taken on a distinct edge, which is quite different from the issues at stake in the British elections, because they hinge on the rival Powers and their supporters. Under various suitable disguises borrowed from political phraseology, parties simply fight out the argument in time and time out, "America versus Russia". It suits them to disguise the issue as "Democracy versus Totalitarianism", or "Communism versus Capitalism", but that is only the window-dressing for fools—the fight between imperialist powers has been going on long before the current excuses and will continue long after they are as dead as the slogans of the 'thirties or even the early 'forties.

In England this issue does not arise because the Communist Party is too small to be taken seriously. It is certainly going to run a hundred candidates, and those who take politics a bit too seriously even imagine this will "split the working-class vote" a little. As is known to everyone, however, except the newspapers, where it would be too startlingly in contradiction with paper-talk to be taken seriously, the Communists' intervention invariably splits the middle-class Liberal vote, because outside the party-liners, the hotch-potch of petty bourgeoisie who vote Communist would vote Liberal and not Labour, just as they read the *News Chronicle* if not, or as well as, the *Daily Worker*, but not the *Daily Herald*. This might give the *Chronicle's* A. J. Cummings blood-pressure nowadays, but, after all, he was the darling of the Popular Fronters when he covered up for Dimitrov and led the fellow-travellers in the dear dead days beyond recall, and one may change one's opinions but not the results of one's former opinions.

It is this Communist intervention which will, in fact, put paid to the Liberals once and for all, although the Conservative line of wooing the Liberals is based on a contrary belief. Most businessmen would like to see the Liberals in because they want the Socialists out and are afraid that a Tory victory would mean an undisciplined Labour movement—which is far too much of a compliment to Transport House. However, whatever may happen to the Liberal label now being steadily pinched by such Tory candidates as are justly ashamed of their own name, the Liberal Party is finished. Its achievements have always been grossly over-rated, partly because of Churchill being reluctant to admit he was ever wrong however much he contradicted himself, and partly because all sides are anxious to woo the Liberal vote. Not only have the Liberals been anxious to take the credit for reforms which were forced out of them by long struggles—but we are even expected to be thankful to them for the dole.

"Two Nations" Theory

THE Tories, in seeking to prove they have always been Liberals at heart, invariably go back to Disraeli. But they overlook Disraeli's shrewd attitude to the Liberals. He saw more clearly than any Conservative statesman the issues of the class war—as he put it, "the two nations". He frankly appealed to the working-classes to support the Tories because the Liberals were then the party of the capitalists, who oppressed the working men of the cities, whereas the Tories, then the landowning aristocracy, whatever they did to the landworker and small farmer, behaved impeccably to the industrial worker! The Tories were quite willing to grant concessions to the industrial worker when he was exploited by their

opponents, the rising bourgeoisie. But sooner or later, and as it happened on the Imperialist issue, the Liberal Party was faced with a crisis and it entered the first of its great splits. These were not due to personalities but to the change in face of England, because the Whig



capitalists and Tories were becoming identical. The Derbys and Russells still predominated in Tory counsels, but the shadow of the Wooltons was already upon them, the capitalist class found its level hand-in-glove with the aristocracy, and the differences between Liberalism and Conservatism became academic. Of course they persisted, just as the differences between Roundhead and Cavalier persist, but the real struggle was dead.

The ambitious politicians who have sought recently to revive the Liberal Party claim to represent all classes because they no longer represent any. They have ferreted out the job-seekers and dogooders and get-rich-quickers and party-switchers and foisted all the hotch-potch off as a "Liberal bunch of candidates". But that is only a political sideshow. It may not last much longer.

Social Democracy

THE growth of the working-class movement has meant the rise of the Labour Party. It should not be overlooked that this rise is far deeper than the mere five years of this Government. For years we have had municipal socialism, labour magistrates, aldermen, members of tribunals, trade unionist representation in management and so on. The basic Fabian ideas have been adopted and little of their original programme of the permeation of capitalist society by Statist influence remains unachieved. The Labour Party has sought nationalisation and a controlled economy in order to implement the social-democratic Fabian programme of State capitalism. They do not object to exploitation provided it is done by the State, or is at least not very large. They have laid down terms of compensation in order to perpetuate the present bureaucratic administration of the monopoly industries which have become nationalised. The structure of the Boards they have created are upper-class in character and the pretence is maintained that the governing class are the only people able to run industry.

For all that the working-class is unlikely to throw them over if the capitalists keep up the continuous squeal that they have been hurt. Many of them undoubtedly think so, and all the vituperation they flung at Lloyd George is now flung at Aneurin Bevan, as the most outstanding Socialist figure, or at the Government generally. Not much time for "deploring materialism" when they

think their profits are affected by not being able to build super-cinemas or take enough money for a Swiss holiday! This, however, has always been the attitude of every ruling-class faced with the prospect of having to re-adapt itself to a new system of society. We are passing from the capitalist era to the State capitalist era; the Labour Party is making the path smooth for them by providing the machinery in which their sons at least will be employed, but so far from thanking them the Tories, still entrenched in the idea that only they are divinely born to rule, yell (as Attlee pointed out) "Jobs for the Boys" whenever a trade unionist is appointed to a job an ex-Etonian might have done just as well.

Vote — What For?

AS for voting. Should one set the seal of approbation on those who rule us? Does it really matter which evil is the greater in the circumstances? The Tories shout in one ear, "Keep the Socialists out", and the Socialists shout in the other ear, "Keep the Tories out", and these are the sanest slogans one can hear, but above the hubbub one can appreciate that the real economic changes towards State capitalism through monopoly are coming whatever Party rules. Do I intend to waste my vote? I seldom waste paper and may this time go along and write "No Government" across it, but I do not suppose the returning officer with a laugh—"imagine what we should do without a government!" as if it was as essential as fire and water, and as durable as the seas and mountains.

The serious problems of the day are not connected with the election in the least, and I do not believe that the electoral period is as fit a time to discuss them as, say, Hampstead Heath on Bank Holiday. However, these columns are not closed, for anarchists at least have a higher idea of free expression even in present circumstances, than is summed-up by those whose democracy apparently consists of voting once every five years, and which (to quote a 1945 newspaper report) "gets rusty" if one of the five-year periods is missed.

A.M.

MARRIAGE Vs. FREE LOVE

A PUBLIC DEBATE was held at a Youth House, Camden Town on 6th February, on the motion "Free Love is desirable and practicable in modern society." The proposer was Rita Milton, seconded by Philip Sansom, of the London Anarchist Group; it was opposed by The Rev. K. Macfarlane Harley, seconded by Nancy Holt, of the Marriage Guidance Council.

Rita Milton opened with a very moderate statement of the case for free unions rather than legal marriage, and approached the subject from personal, social and political angles. The Rev. Macfarlane Harley followed, putting the "Christian" point of view in opposition; he referred rather generally to psychologists and anthropologists as supporting this viewpoint. It became obvious that the gulf between the proposer and opposer was extremely wide, and that the reverend gentleman understood little of the speech he was attacking.

Philip Sansom devoted the short time at his disposal to dealing with a few of the highly-coloured pictures of triumphant lust that the opposer had conjured up. Nancy Holt then gave a personal statement of just how happy her marriage had been, and how happy others could be. She shuddered to think of the horrors which would ensue if "these people" managed to force their ideas on the community.

It was noticeable that speakers from the floor, both for and against the motion, appeared to have a far clearer grasp of the subject under discussion than the Marriage Guidance Council speakers. Many of the factual statements which the Rev. Macfarlane Harley made in support of his opinion were challenged as being wholly inaccurate and misleading.

The summing-up by the two principals merely served to emphasise that there was not the slightest grounds of agreement between the two parties to the debate.

G.

Refuse to Vote!

(Continued from page 1)

all believe in the capitalist economy, Conservatives and Liberals want it in private hands, and the Labour Party and the Communists want it in the hands of the State (that is, themselves, if they win).

You Vote For War!

Thus to vote for any party is to vote for preparation for war, for the acceptance of authority, and for an economic system that exploits us both as producers and as consumers; to abstain from voting and leave it at that, is merely washing our hands of

social responsibility. But to abstain from voting and at the same time to develop methods of resistance to war and authority and economic exploitation is the only electoral policy for people who believe in human dignity and the enjoyment of life. This is not a negative attitude. The negative position is that of continual compromises; of always choosing the lesser evil. There can in fact be no compromise between the anarchist attitude and the political one, between the negation and the affirmation of power and authority. Government is for slaves. Free men govern themselves.

A Reader Writes -

IN spite of countless disappointments, fresh millions of votes will go into the ballot-boxes shortly. They will be cast by people to whom the action of voting implies the sole means whereby political and economic changes can be effected. The delegation of responsibilities, social and political, to the nebulous entity of the state on part of a whole people—minus a few that see through the swindle of contemporary democracy—poses the question: what is the nature of this swindle?

It lies in the fact that the 'liberty' to vote does not, and will not in the coming general election, afford an opportunity to change the content of society. We can with our vote change the form of political control, turn the diamond round to show another facet, but the nature of society is not in question and the ballot-box can only record votes in favour of the state as an entity. All political parties are agreed upon the retention of the state: a vote for the state—"the organ of suppression, of domination"—can be given to any of the 'contesting' parties, for the result is the same. The result is acceptance of the path that is leading the Race to barbarism, to the decline of civilization. Worse still—a decline based upon our present knowledge of the means of destruction.

That capitalist democracy is a swindle is something that can be a shock only to the die-hard reader of the rubbish press. This however does not put us in the same category as the fascist-stalinists who, when it suits the purpose of political demagoguery, say the same thing. Reaction will besmirch democracy on the basis of its decline, on the indisputable showing of repeated miseries and deceptions visited upon the people. They call capitalism in its decline democracy, and with this label firmly affixed around the necks of the unfortunate electorate, they ask what the hell they are doing with it there. Labour government, Liberal government, Conservative ditto—it has still been called democracy. Reaction points the swindle but only in order to hasten the trend towards the super state, and the final eclipse of man's cultural achievements.

We go different ways, we who have stepped aside from the fantastic and time-wasting ideological acrobatics the "orthodox" politicals must perform.

We want to transform swindle into reality—to breathe fire and life into democracy and to give it content where now is but hollow lip-service. Can such be done through the organised state authority? No—just as democracy, a facet of the state, is and can only be a means to an end—our end if we so are actuated. Outside of the gas-house at Westminster can and must be built the broad front of the troubled, thoughtful and largely disillusioned members of all classes. Yes, all classes—let us not suffer from 'working-classitis' on this score, all are faced with contemporary issues in all their perplexity. The people of our land will find in the demand for democratic actuality the means whereby the gates will be opened to a real advance towards democracy of content—and through it to a stateless and classless society, the sole hope of mankind.

JAMES GIRTON.

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