

Freedom

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EIGHT HOURS AND AN EIGHT HOURS BILL.

AN eight hours working day? By all means. The only objection to it is that it is too long. But an Eight Hours Bill. What is the good of that? Bills are the middle class way of doing things, which suits the propertied classes nicely, since it is a way that keeps the whip and reins in their hands, and even when they have to make a little bit of a concession to the workers they can do it with an air of patronage and free consent, grateful to their sense of superiority. "You are our masters now," they say to the worker who comes to them cap in hand for some little bill or another, "how can we serve you?" Meanwhile they tip one another a wink; "We know what labour legislation means. We must guard our property and keep the toilers quiet, and much cry and little wool is the good old way." So they talk a great deal at all sorts of political meetings, from clubs to the House, and do—exactly what the workers force them to do. The workers get out of their masters in Parliament merely the official recognition of what they have had the energy and courage to get out of them outside. A change becomes inevitable. It takes place in men's minds; it begins to influence their conduct; and Parliament passes a bill about it amid an immense flourish of trumpets; generally a miserably inadequate enactment, which has to be remodelled over and over again, and is unsatisfactory in the end. Parliamentary legislation has about as much influence (for good at least) in any serious social reform as the proverbial fly, which sat on the axle of the chariot wheel and said, "What a dust I raise!"

If the workers, or even a fair sprinkling of them, are determined to get Eight Hours, those who act together will get what they want. Recent strikes have shown them that where they are resolute and united capitalists are powerless. And if the workers insist on Eight Hours, the governing classes will very likely amuse themselves by passing an Eight Hours Bill. They naturally cling to the forms of law and order, and don't like to yield too openly to the direct "revolutionary" action of strikes and big demonstrations. It pleases them, and in itself will do the workers no harm; so long as they keep it clearly in their heads that it is their own active determination that has shortened their working day, and not the Bill and its machinery.

The worst is that many don't realise this, and think the law has worked the change, and that delusion tends to keep up the slavish old habit of looking to the ruling classes for direction and help. These believers in law fall an easy prey to active, young, middle-class democrats on the look out for a following, and ready to lead the workers a devil's dance through a whole series of petty economic and political reforms, which they call "Socialism," and "Steps to Socialism," diverting the attention of the masses from that united, direct action wherein their hope lies.

One big, determined strike is worth a dozen bills; one strong union a dozen political associations. The future of the workers lies in their own hands. They have only to act together and to act for themselves, and they can not merely raise wages or gain an eight hours working day, but re-organise the whole system of work and the whole method of sharing its produce. They need no Acts of Parliament to enable them to put an end to the rule of one set of men by another, and to bring about the Social Revolution.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

WE have had nearly enough of capital punishment in England. Richard Davis is probably one of the last victims of this horrible relic of barbarism. If the poor fellow had realised the service his judicial murder would render to the cause of humanity it might have served to console his last moments. The active sentiments of sympathy and pity he has aroused will spur the already widespread sense that hanging is a brutality unworthy of a civilised people. Already the Reading Grand Jury, after listening to the charge of their Recorder, Queen's Counsel Griffiths, an old adversary of the death penalty, have made a presentment against capital punishment, which has been sent in to the Home Secretary. A straw that shows clearly how the wind blows, for Grand Juries are not usually in the forefront of progress.

There was an interesting article in the *Fortnightly Review* for September, 1889, by B. P. Neuman, showing that even from the legal point of view capital punishment has now been proved by experience to be a failure, and drawing attention to the rapidity with which this penalty is being erased from the statute books of the world.

In England in the reign of George III. (1760-1820) there were about

two hundred crimes punishable with death. At present we have reduced these to two, *i.e.*, treason and murder, and certainly the person and even property are far safer now than they were then. Lawyers are very fond of saying that this is partly due to the fact that when the punishment is not irrevocable and violent the Jury are more willing to convict according to the evidence, and that therefore the punishment of the guilty is more certain if less terrible; but this, they used to add, does not apply to murder, the moral sense of jurymen and of the majority of the people favours the death penalty in this case. Sir William Harcourt brought forward this argument as a reason for refusing to support a bill for the abolition of capital punishment when he was in office. No lawyer can honestly bring forward such an argument to-day. After almost every death sentence we have an agitation for commutation, death sentences are continually commuted, juries continually "recommend to mercy," and when the recommendation is not attended to, as in Richard Davis's case, we have jurors publicly stating that their resource in future will be to refuse to convict. "Out of every hundred committals for murder in England," says Mr. Neuman, "there result about forty-nine convictions," whereas "in non-capital cases the proportion of convictions is much larger—76 per cent." In fact, murderers on trial to-day are in much the same uncertainty as to the result as thieves were shortly before the death penalty was abolished for thieving. Their fate is entirely uncertain, quite apart from the question of their innocence or guilt. It is a toss up if they will be hanged or not. Even from a lawyer's point of view, so uncertain a punishment cannot be supposed an effective deterrent from crime.

But does experience show that it ever really acted as a deterrent? The only satisfactory evidence on this point can be obtained from countries and provinces where capital punishment formerly existed and where it has now been abolished. There are more of such countries and provinces than many of us know. Mr. Neuman gives the following list:—

Total abolition:—

1. *Holland*.—Capital punishment abolished September, 1870 (as a matter of fact there has been no execution since 1860). Statistics of murder 1861 to 1869, nineteen murders; 1871 to 1879, seventeen murders, though the population has increased.

2. *Finland*.—No execution since 1824. The Judge of the Court of Appeal states: "Security of person and property has not been the least diminished by the suspension of capital punishment."

3. *Switzerland*.—Capital punishment abolished 1874. In 1879 it was made optional for each canton. Two or three only have returned to it, and these owing to an exceptional scare.

4. *Belgium*.—No execution since 1873. Statistics, 1853 to 1863, 921 murders; 1863 to 1873, 703 murders.

5. *Portugal*.—No capital punishment.

6. *Roumania*.—No capital punishment.

7. *Prussia*.—From 1869 to 1878 484 persons were sentenced to death, but only Hödel was executed.

8. *Tuscany*.—No execution for fifty years.

9. *Russia*.—Capital punishment reserved for "Nihilists" and military offenders.

10. In America, five States have abolished capital punishment: Michigan, 1847; Rhode Island, 1852; Wisconsin, 1853; Iowa, 1872; Maine, 1876. In Michigan, murders have since decreased relatively to the population, 57 per cent. Governor Washburne, of Wisconsin, writes in 1873, "No State can show greater freedom from homicidal crime." Senator Jessup writes in 1876 of Iowa, "Previous to the Repeal there was one murder for every 800,000 people. For the four years since abolition there has been one for every 1,200,000." He adds the interesting remark, "There is more lynch law where the gallows is retained." In six other American States capital punishment has practically been discontinued. Illinois only revived the use of the gallows for our Anarchist comrades.

In three European countries the death penalty has also fallen gradually into practical disuse, *viz.*, *Austria* (1870-1879, 9,806 sentences, 16 executed), *Sweden* (1869-78, 32 sentences, 3 executed), and *Norway* (1869-78, 14 sentences, 3 executed). With such figures as these before us, it is impossible to say that the abolition of capital punishment is a leap in the dark, likely to let loose a flood of reckless violence upon the country. The weight of such definite experience as has been gained on the subject inclines decidedly to show that the penalty of death does not increase public security, does not deter from crime.

This result of experience is exactly what a careful analysis of the subject on medical and moral grounds might have led us to expect. In the first place, does not all intelligent and sympathetic scrutiny of the com-

lications of human life and conduct go to show that it is well nigh impossible even for the sincerest and most impartial of on-lookers to judge accurately and fairly of the actions of those about them? A great love, an exceptionally keen intuition, the intellectual grip of a Shakespeare or an Ibsen, these may be able to throw the revealing light of truth upon conduct, and lay bare the true significance of facts. But are these the qualifications of the average jurymen, the ordinary witness; do these guide the speech of the lawyer, the summing-up of the judge? Slowly our experience is teaching us that in human nature there is no such thing as an isolated fact, a hard and fast line, an unrelated incident. Men are so bound up in one another that it is the hardest task in all the world to discover the boundaries of isolated moral responsibility. Our faculties are so undeveloped and so uneven in their activity, so dependent upon one another and upon obscure physical conditions, that it is extremely difficult to arrive by their aid at any momentous decision. The more a man knows of himself, of human life, of nature, the less cocksure he will be. The most that a man can say on any subject, the most certain evidence that he can give as to any fact, is that it *appears to him* to be so and so. When we bear in mind this necessary imperfection of all human testimony, all human judgment, we cease to wonder at the awful mistakes of "justice." "Some time ago, Sir James Mackintosh, a most cold and dispassionate observer, declared that taking a long period of time, one innocent man was hanged in every three years." The late Chief Baron Kelly stated as the result of his experience that from 1802-40 no fewer than *twenty-two* innocent men had been sentenced to death, of whom seven were actually executed. These terrible mistakes are not confined to England. Mittelmaier refers to cases of a similar kind in Ireland, Italy, France, and Germany." And all these are, of course, only those in which the mistake has afterwards been found out. Who shall say in how many it has never been discovered? Let us pass from the innocent to the guilty. Out of every forty-nine men and women convicted of murder in England, fourteen on an average are so hopelessly insane that even our present unscientific and barbarous judicial procedure sends them to the lunatic asylum instead of the gallows. Of the remaining thirty six, Mr. Neuman remarks, "There can be little doubt that many have been hung who were practically not responsible for their actions," and he gives two suggestive examples, O'Donnell, who had been an inmate of an asylum two years before his execution in 1876, and another poor fellow, hanged in the same year, who was known amongst his pals as "Mad Marks." These obvious facts, patent to the most casual observer, are preparing the public mind to receive the results of the investigations of medical experts as to the cause of crime and its cure. Dr. Maudsley, in England, Dr. Lombroso and others in Italy and Germany, have for years been studying the bodily causes of criminal action. The result of their researches goes to make clear that in numberless cases the criminal is the sick or deformed person, the person whose brain is deficient or misshapen, or whose nervous system or physical functions are deranged. Now a person may be made ill by circumstances outside himself, and when he is ill such circumstances may have a powerful influence in curing him or making his malady chronic or deadly. The observations of Mr. Hill, of the Italian Professor Ferri, and others, make it clear that climate and the state of the weather is one of the external circumstances that largely affects illness of this sort; but there is another class of circumstances at least as powerful, probably far more so, *i.e.*, social conditions, and these, at least, are within our control. It is one of the most damning indictments against the present economic system, that it is one which makes the rational treatment of crime almost impossible. If criminals are to be treated with the tenderness and pity their condition demands, their lot will be a far happier one than that of many a sane and honest worker, and crime will be made to seem the passport to a consideration and comfort denied to the innocent. Like all other lines of social inquiry, an investigation of capital punishment leads us to Socialism. In the midst of the present shocking economic inequality, no radical reform is possible in this or in any other direction.

The treatment of criminals by the society of to-day is worse than the treatment of other invalids by the Tchouktche savages. When a Tchouktche has been ill for some time, and no care seems to do him any good, his tribe-folk tie a rope round his neck and set off and run round and round the house with him. If he falls, so much the worse for him, he is dragged over stones and briars until he dies or declares himself cured. The man can help being ill if he likes, and that he may "make an effort" to rid the tribe of the burden of an invalid it is as well to make sickness as disagreeable as possible. These savages only carry their belief in the deterrent influence of punishment a step further back than we, and they do first try gentler methods. But we constantly surround our moral invalids (and which of us can hope to be a member of that class at no moment of his life) with the most degrading social conditions, and if favoured by these the disease gains hold upon them and they become criminals we punish them without mercy.

A sense of the cruel injustice of this is beginning to grow up in England and on the Continent. It has for some time shown itself in partial attempts at prison reform and in prisoner's aid societies; the day seems near at hand when it will take here the bolder step it has already taken elsewhere, and demand that capital punishment shall be abolished.

But the end of the system of judicial murder is but the beginning of the greater question of judicial penalties. How long shall we continue to ignorantly worship this monstrous fetish of punishment? How long shall we continue to pin our faith to the crude fancy that birch rods and prison cells can be either the cures or the preventives of moral disease?

WHAT RIGHT HAVE WE TO JUDGE?

A correspondent writes:—

Will you allow me to suggest one point which, so far as I know, has not been touched upon in the letters that have appeared in various newspapers concerning the Crewe parricide?

The advisability or non-advisability of capital punishment for *breaches of law as such*, is a question apart, which must be discussed on its own merits, and into which I will not attempt to enter; but in this case moral as well as legal issues have been raised, and both the advocates and opponents of reprieve seem, from their letters, to have considered themselves competent to weigh and measure the moral culpability of the prisoners. Much has been said about the "extreme provocation" under which the murder was committed, and the "touching" circumstances of the case;—but is there not some want of delicacy,—something almost unseemly, in this stripping naked of a family life, and tearing open the secret heart of one whose wrongs we have never suffered, and into whose position we cannot enter?

The interference of public opinion in any case of parricide, of whatever nature, jars upon a certain instinct of mental decency. However abandoned a son may be,—whom has the father but himself to accuse for the existence of such a moral abortion?—Like Frankenstein, he himself has called the monster into being.

But surely, in a case like this, even the most self-righteous of us may abstain from judging another's liberty of conscience. A man first takes upon himself the tremendous responsibility of putting a child into this not altogether satisfactory world; he then not only neglects that responsibility, but physically ill-treats the child and deforms his mind by a poisonous moral atmosphere of tyranny. Under these influences the boy grows up; then, at the critical period of life, when he begins to put away childish things, he sees his mother insulted and his little brothers and sisters ill-used. If, after that, he regards and treats his father as a noxious reptile to be got rid of, are we to judge between them?

The conventional idea of the peculiar atrocity of parricide rests upon the assumption that to put a person into the world without his consent is invariably a kindness, and to put him out of it a cruelty. But, indeed, this gift of life, which means, for many of us, only a few years of struggle and pain, leading to inevitable death,—is it really a blessing so unmixed and absolute as to outweigh all the horror of domestic tyranny? It is hard, in truth, if there is no redress for wrong, because the wronger is the father; surely an accusation more against him.

"What if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter;—shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless, wide world?"

L.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN NEWCASTLE.

(From a local Secretary of the National Labour Federation.)

QUITE a number of unions have been formed here lately and they exhibit considerable solidarity. The engineers and their labourers who have lately been out on the Tyne, Wear and Tees have succeeded in arranging that after May 10 they shall leave off work at 12 instead of 1 o'clock on Saturdays; but the employers to make up have invented a new system of fines for lost time, and have abolished the August Bank holiday. If this result shows the men their unsatisfactory position as mere wage-earners it will not be fruitless. It is to be hoped that their next demand will be more worthy of a strike and one in which all the engineers and labourers in the country can join them.

One of the most successful unions here is the National Labour Union. It has been in existence fourteen months, has 40,000 members and £5000 to its credit. The secretary has declared himself in favour of the Eight Hours' Bill. Our society the National Labour Federation, has lately formed quite a number of new branches. We have now 200 substantial branches and 42 different bodies of workpeople in connection with us have received advances in wages without resorting to a strike.

The Labour Federation is open to both men and women. We have lately had a strike of 320 ropery girls for 3s. a-week advance and a number of other women in connection with us have received 2s. advance without a strike.

Some members of the London Women's Provident League, Lady Dilke, Mrs. Cunninghame Graham and Mrs. Routledge, have just been down to Newcastle and held a series of meetings to promote unionism amongst the women workers here. They have succeeded in starting a sick and out-of-work benefit society amongst the white lead workers, which is about 120 strong. These women seemed timid about a strike at first, but now 75 of them are out for higher wages.

As far as I can see the only means of realising Anarchism is to leave politics severely alone and devote our energies to pushing trades unionism into making demands upon employers for some share in the management of business and some voice in the distribution of profits, with the ultimate project of abolishing proprietors altogether

INDIVIDUAL OR COMMON PROPERTY.

A DISCUSSION.

IN the last issue of *Freedom* Tarn asks what I mean by the word right. In reply I may state that I do not believe in abstract right and wrong. I believe we have to learn what is right and wrong, just the same as we learn to walk and talk, *i.e.*, by observation and experience. In the case of the five pound note Tarn certainly has the right of possession, if, as he says, the bank is in a sound condition, but it does not follow that he has a just claim to the five pounds. He may have extracted it from the workers in the shape of rent, interest or profit, in which case his claim to have a right to the five pounds would be both unjust in itself and actively injurious to the workers from whom he took it. Tarn says that the institution of private property in the exaggerated and unnatural forms in which it exists to-day, rests not so much on the selfishness of the few as on the unselfishness of the many. I don't think this is true. If he had said, "the ignorance and superstition of the many" he would have been nearer the mark. I do not see why comrade Tarn wants us to remember that private property has been evolved out of common property. A number of greedy warriors and churchmen, courtiers and usurers, shielding themselves behind pretences of religion, patriotism, or the public good, stole the land from the people, but that is no reason for supposing that the previous communism was proved by the sober and honest judgment of mankind to be unjust or impracticable. When we clear out of men's brains the imaginary right to rule one's neighbour, together with imaginary moral necessity to submit to such rule from others, I do not think there will be any danger of the worker being tricked again.

Tarn says that he would not advise the workers to seize the accumulated wealth and use it for the common benefit, and he goes on to say that if any worker did seize any of this accumulated wealth, he would be sure to use it for his own benefit, and he would advise him to do so. As a matter of fact, in the riot of 1886, one of our comrades who was present specially noticed that when a shop was looted those inside handed out the things to the crowd in general. There may have been a few unsocial people who laid hold on what they could for themselves and ran away with it, but the general spirit was exactly the opposite. It was share and share alike, those in front handing what they could reach to those behind. This is merely one instance, and a small and partial one, but it goes to confirm the idea that there is an instinctively communist tendency in the present revolutionary movement. But to return to the general line of argument. It is impossible for the workers individually to use the mines, railways, ships, and factories for their own benefit, unless they manage somehow to monopolise them. I do not want to raise any frivolous objections to Individualism, but I should like our comrades, the Individualists, to explain how they will work the larger industries under Individualist Anarchy? Tarn goes on to say that the real difference between Communism and Individualism is that while Communism would convert the workers into thieves, Individualism would convert the thieves into workers. Now I should like Tarn to show us how a number of men who have agreed to labour and share their products in common, on terms of free co-operation, would deserve the name of thieves.

In reply to my question as to how he was going to decide the merits and abilities of each, Tarn shows the difference between Communism and Individualism; according to him it seems to be a case of free co-operation *versus* unrestricted competition. Individualism is based on the assumption that every man's conduct is mainly actuated by the narrowest egoism: each for himself. Communism assumes that men have learnt their relationship as members of society and seeing how they depend upon one another, act upon the principle of altruism, live for others. But Anarchism or Free Communism rests on the conviction that neither of these two theories fully expresses what is the true spring of human conduct at its best. We contend that the supposed contradiction between these principles of action is only due to the fact that they are incompletely understood, that neither covers the whole ground or goes to the root of the matter. We believe that the real vital underlying principle of the conduct of well developed human beings, when they are free to live after their own nature, is the wider egoism. By this we mean the sense of each that he must think and act and feel by and for himself on his own responsibility, and yet that neither in feeling, nor thinking, nor acting can he cut himself off from his fellows without a terrible injury to his own self. Their good is his good and his good is their good. It must be so, whether he is intelligent enough to recognise it or not, because man is a social animal and evolution has socialised him more and more, made him more and more dependent on what association with his fellows has to give him. The Social Revolution is, at bottom, just the general recognition of this fact, and a determination to live more in accordance with it. Therefore after the Social Revolution we look for something better than the re-establishment of the narrow selfish claim that each shall grab for himself exactly what he can produce, demanding the right to prevent others from sharing any of it with him whatever their needs or his plenty may be. N'Importe Qui admitted in his letter that wealth will be plentiful after the revolution, then what motive shall we have for quibbling over what is our exact share and what some one else's. It is only because wealth is held back by artificial means for the benefit of the few that the possessive pronouns have the meaning put upon them.

I think it would help this discussion very much if one of our Individualist friends would clearly state what Individualism means in the sense in which they use the term. Our position as Free Communists is

this: A man produces for the satisfaction of his needs, and when he both labours and shares his product in common with his fellow men on terms of free co-operation, his needs are more easily and variously satisfied, his social instincts are gratified, and, no matter with what degree of energy he labours, he is always a far happier man than he who isolates himself from society and claims an exact remuneration for his particular labour; and every satisfied happy person is a gain to society, thinks better, feels better, works better, than he could if he were dissatisfied and unhappy. We believe in free groups of workers uniting and disuniting according to their interests and inclinations, and for their work and common understanding, relying on personal initiative and individual social feeling.

I very much doubt whether free competition and free contract would reward the workers according to their natural abilities. I hope, however, to return to this part of the subject before the discussion is over. But there is one other point I wish to touch upon this month. We Anarchists all believe in the free association of men and women, and the abolition of all authoritative restraints or interferences in sex relations. Now I want to know what would become of the children of these free unions, if their existence depended on private charity? If it did so, your new society would breed up cowards ready to cringe and crawl to anybody who might be in a better position, not men and women willing to assert their freedom.

In reply to Tarn's question why we do not illustrate our principles by a practical example, let me remind him that we are harassed by laws which we are forced to obey against our will. Whilst we are forced by circumstances into cut-throat competition, any attempt to start a commune on our principles must be a failure. No, we are not waiting for the majority; we are merely waiting till we have gained sufficient freedom to act as we think right. Our position to-day is amongst the workers helping on by word and deed the social revolution which will give us the freedom we need, pointing out the dangers of private property and law, trying to hasten the time when the worker will rise in rebellion against the unjust claims of those who have so long lived in idleness on the misery of the toilers.

T. PEARSON.

AN OPEN LETTER

FROM AN ANARCHIST WORKER TO A SOCIALISTIC M.P.

OUR SOCIALISTIC M.P. says that he and the State Socialists detest government as much as Anarchists do, and that he means to endure it as short a time as possible; but he also says he regards it as a necessity of the times, hideous though it is. He does not, however, point out wherein this necessity exists. I can understand the propertied class regarding government as a necessity; they need it for the protection of their property and English interests abroad. But these interests are not the interests of our class. He might say probably that government is necessary for working out the emancipation of labour which is the beginning of Socialism. On this point there may easily be two opinions. Admitting the possibility in time of nationalising everything (after compensating everybody from whom you take anything) there still remains your declaration of the hideous and detestable character of government, that it is "a certain laying aside of a man's individual rights;" and the fact that all this time you are making yourself a member of and perfecting the machinery of a confessedly hateful institution. And this long course of State Socialism you say you think would be a good or at least a necessary preparation for Anarchism. We think that the minority should have full liberty to do as it pleases, its action not interfering with the majority doing the same. You think human nature would have improved so much with a hundred years' further exercise of the power of the majority to tax and otherwise impose its will on the minority, that by the end of that time all people would be heartily glad to lay down this power to coerce! It is absurd. The exercise of political power is no preparation for the observance of equal rights. Your attitude really implies that to persist in one course of action will lead to the adoption of another the very reverse of it. That, for instance, if you continue the system of taxation you will finally arrive at a system in which it has no place. Or that by compelling people to do that which they should have liberty to leave undone you gradually acquire the forbearance necessary for leaving them alone. We must be prepared to lay down all such powers at once and practise our Anarchism now if it is Anarchism we are striving after, as you say it is.

An example of this political power of which it is urged by State Socialists that we should seek to possess ourselves, may be found in the power which it is proposed in the Fabian Eight Hour Bill to give to the majority of workpeople employed in any one occupation to determine by vote how many hours they shall all work. Now if one man works fifteen hours per day he does not thereby prevent others from working fifteen hours per day, they therefore have no right to prevent him from working fifteen, or similarly, any other number of hours per day. This at least is my own individual opinion and it is therefore that I do not wish to see our class invested with any such power. You may say I would not be opposed to voting on an eight hours' day in a trade union. That is true, but a trade union is not a government nor does it possess the powers of government.

This brings me to the very common assertion of State Socialists that Anarchists object to combination. They misunderstand us. We do not object to trade unions or even rings and corners so far as their constitution goes. The principle on which they are founded is a good one. They are all voluntary associations. In all these the people concerned (and only those who have a common interest) freely associate for the

attainment of certain objects more or less defined. They settle their differences by a vote, but if these differences are serious it is possible that members will refuse to be bound by the vote in which case they withdraw from the society and their contributions cease. But under government, while we may vote in a second-hand sort of way, by means of a representative, for or against a proposition, yet however much we may object to it we cannot escape from the power of the majority to enforce its decisions and our taxes continue the same as before. The power to pay or withhold payment is the only safeguard of our liberties as individuals. Therefore we Anarchists advocate abstention from the polls and the avoidance of all political methods and aims in all efforts for the regeneration of society.

It is because the workers have had so little share in the political life of the country that their organisation on purely voluntary principles—the principles of Anarchism—has advanced as it has done. Our experience of trade unionism by no means leads us to despair of effecting still greater things with its aid than have yet been accomplished by that method. The present extraordinary extension of labour organisation is beyond our expectations. It only remains to develop solidarity, to formulate our demands and take common action to make the trades unions an irresistible power for the elevation of the workers. Abandon this course now for politics and this development of trade unionism is postponed indefinitely. Its vitality will be gone. No organisation is wanted for casting a vote. The organised workers, because of their organisation, are fully able now to hold their own against employers without resorting to the childish barbarism of the ballot box. The sooner we recognise this and the possibilities of a studied exercise of this power of unionism the brighter will the prospects be of a final solution of the labour question and the speedy realisation of Anarchist Socialism.

SOCIETY ON THE MORROW OF THE REVOLUTION.

Translated from the French of JEHAN LE VAGRE.

V.—THE IDLERS.

THERE is another objection to which we should think it useless to reply but that it has been put to us by many of our workshop companions. It is this: If in your Society everyone is able to consume without being compelled to produce in return no one would wish to work, or, at any rate, there would be a great number of idlers who would do nothing; the rest would, therefore, be forced to work for them.

To this objection we again reply that those who raise it look at things too much from the point of view of the existing Society, and do not form a just idea of what the transformed Society will be like. To-day, when the worker is crushed under exhausting and repugnant work for twelve or thirteen hours a day, often under conditions more or less unhealthy, and for a ridiculously small wage which scarcely prevents him from dying of hunger,—certainly he cannot help being disgusted with work. But in the future Society, when, as we have before said, there will be restored to productive work the multitude of wage receivers who to-day only employ themselves in the maintenance of the governmental machine which crushes us amongst its numerous wheels, or whose work consists merely in supplying a greater amount of enjoyment to our present exploiters. When, too, a better distribution of work will have diminished the work of the hand, and by a greater extension of the mechanical processes production will have been facilitated, while the hours of work will have been very much reduced; when the workshop will have been made healthy by repairing and altering the buildings which are now in use, and which can easily be made to suit the wants of the producing groups. When, besides, in the most exhausting kinds of work machinery will be employed instead of hand labour, and that by all these immediate ameliorations the working day will be reduced to four, five or six hours at the most, we do not believe that there will be so many idlers as is suggested. Man has within him a force of activity which it is necessary to expend in some manner or other, and when it happens that the greater part of his time will be his for his leisure, or any occupation he may desire to follow, we do not see what interest he will have in refusing to work, particularly as all work done will be reciprocal.

But we willingly admit—and certainly it will occur in the beginning—that there may be some natures sufficiently corrupted by the present Society to refuse to do any work. But, at all events, these will only be a very insignificant minority. To-day when, half-fed, we have to work like madmen to fatten a herd of parasites of all sorts and conditions, many of the workers find that very natural, but in a society where we shall know that all our wants will be satisfied, where work will be made much more attractive, shall we with light hearts set up masters unto us under the pretext that there may be some few individuals demoralised by the present Society who refuse to work. Come, come! Is it not the case that we should derive greater advantage from letting them alone than from establishing an organisation for the purpose of compelling them to work, and which would probably not be able to do that for which it was created. Some of us remember the fable of Lafontaine, in which the Gardener sought out the Lord of the place, asking him to deliver him from the rabbit that ate his cabbages.

Moreover, these men, left to themselves in a Society in which the rule, the very base of life, will be Work (whereas in the Society of to-day the contrary is the case) will very soon be ashamed of their position, and will come of their own accord, after a lapse of time more or less long, to do some work. They will come and implore for work so as not to die of weariness, whilst, on the other hand, by trying to force them,

you drive them into open war with society. Then they will seek to procure by trickery or by force (the theft and murder of the present society) what you refuse to let them have willingly. It will be necessary to establish a police force to prevent them from taking what you refuse to give them, judges to condemn them, gaolers to guard them; in short, little by little to reconstitute the present form of society. That is to say, in order not to feed a certain number of idlers who, as we have said before, if left to themselves would very soon be ashamed of their position, we should create a new sort of idlers, with this serious additional trouble,—that the situation of these last in society would be legal, but they would produce nothing just the same as the others and would only serve to perpetuate the situation. Thus we should have two kinds of idlers to feed, those who live at the expense of society in spite of it, and those that society had created itself, without taking into account that the authority thus established would be able at any moment to turn against those who had established it.

It is also said: Men are too much corrupted by their present education, and by their heritage of several thousand centuries of prejudice of all kinds; they will be neither wise enough nor improved enough on the morrow of the Revolution to be left free to organise themselves.

What do you say! Men will not be wise enough to control themselves and to avoid this danger, you have nothing better to suggest than to put at the head of these men, who? other men! who will be intelligent perhaps, but who none the less will share these prejudices and these vices with which you reproved the mass. In other words, instead of trying to remove these prejudices and vices from the mass, and to try and obtain by the help of all the spark of intelligence, which can light our path to the future society, you place the whole destinies of society in the hands of a few individuals who will guide it according to the more or less narrow ideas which they hold, for whatever may be the width of conception of the human brain, every man has a side of his mind which urges him in spite of himself into the craggy pathways of routine.

And then, besides, who will choose these chiefs? We do not suppose that they would choose themselves? it would therefore be the people? But you have just told us that they would not be wise enough to control their own actions, and by what miracle would they be wise enough to make a proper choice amongst all the intriguers who would come to canvass their votes.

Ah! Take care that when you come to speak to us of progress and liberty we do not come to the conclusion that your method of following progress is to hinder it, under the pretext that you are not free to follow it; that the only liberty you wish to conquer is that which consists in disembarassing yourself of those who do not think the same as you, of those who believe that there are no superior men who contain within themselves the knowledge of humanity, but that this knowledge on the contrary is scattered among the human race; of those who believe that it is only in leaving all intelligences free to investigate and to group themselves that the light will appear; of those who believe, in short, that it is only by seeing at its side a group well organised that a group badly organised will be transformed in trying to improve itself, and that from the continual clashing of new ideas, continual movement, never ending alterations, will come in the end that communion of ideas of which nobody has yet discovered the secret, and which it is vain to try and establish by force.

THE PROPAGANDA.

FREEDOM DISCUSSION MEETINGS.—Three of the series have taken place at the Autonomie Club, Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road. The first, April 3rd, was opened by Kropotkin, on "Why we are Communists." There was an attentive and crowded audience. Vague opposition was offered by Donald, Binning, and Moreton, support being given by Casey, Harrigan and Pearson. The second discussion, April 10th, on Anarchy *v.* Democracy, opened by T. Pearson, was somewhat marred by the personal character of some of the remarks made in the debate. However, the audience was almost unanimously in favour of the opener, Donald opposing, Kropotkin, Harrigan and Heinrich supporting. The third, April 17th, was opened by W. Neilson on "A Worker's Ideal," whereby the lecturer plainly demonstrated that whatever might make the worker happy it would certainly not be merely a few hours less work and a few shillings more pay. Again the opposers were Donald and Binning, support being given by N. F. Dryhurst. Kropotkin was unfortunately prevented attending by illness.

BALL'S POND.—On Sunday, March 30th, T. Pearson lectured to this Branch of the National Secular Society on Communist Anarchism. Attentive audience, opposition from a Republican and a Salvationist.

A NEW ANARCHIST GROUP.—An Anarchist group, consisting of both Individualists and Communists, has been started, and meets for discussion every Sunday evening at 8 p.m. at the Autonomie Club, 6, Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road. The first discussion, on March 30, was opened by Tarn, and followed by a good debate. On the 6th April, Stevens (Individualist) opened a discussion on Communism *v.* Individualism, and was opposed by Neilson, T. Pearson and Heinrich, and supported by Harrigan and others. The meeting was crowded. On the 13th, the discussion was resumed, and was opened by T. Pearson (Communist), who was opposed by Green, Bonham, Miss Tilton and Tarn, and supported by Heinrich. Linden (Social Democrat) also spoke. The discussion was very interesting, and the hall crowded.

NOTICES.

Freedom Discussion Meetings will be held during May at the Gleihheit Hall, 218, Old Street, E.C., on Thursday Evenings, at 8 o'clock.

May 1st.—Peter Kropotkin.	} Admis- sion free.
May 8th.—J. E. Barlas.	
May 15th.—A. Marsh.	
May 22nd.—W. Neilson.	
May 29th.—T. Pearson.	