

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

VOL. XVIII.—No. 188.

JUNE, 1904.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY

Labour Unions in Canada; or, Signs of the Time.

The Government of the Canadian province of British Columbia had nominated lately a Commission to investigate the causes and the effects of the recent labour conflicts in the province, and the Report of this Commission, which is now out, is very interesting. It states, to begin with, that the importation of yellow labour into Canada is a *necessity* for the province. White Englishmen cannot live without exploiting somebody—white, or black negroes, or yellow slaves. And as the white slaves begin (at last!) to consider themselves as good as their would-be masters—the Chinaman becomes a “necessity.” Lots of things are said against this thrifty and submissive labourer, but—“I do not see,” the proud Britisher concludes, “how the saw-mills, the canneries and mines of comparatively low grade could be worked at a profit without him.”

Oh, dear old England, growing on the shores of the Pacific as well as on the velds of the Transvaal! He “does not see” how to produce wealth without having a supply of yellow slaves! And for that idiot who has become too fat and too lazy even to think we must introduce yellow slavery, after having fought a couple of generations ago against black slavery! “In all the creation there is no creature more cruel than the shopkeeper whose trade has come to a stop, whose customers have gone to another shopkeeper, and whose goods don’t sell,” thus the great German poet Heinrich Heine wrote of the English shopkeepers in 1842, when they were waging the opium war against China, and crushed in blood an uprising in India. Now the shopkeeper has felt once more the same danger—his goods don’t sell so high as before—and once more he is ready to commit all the crimes, all the abominations in the Far and the Near East, in Africa—anywhere—to get the money which he sees flowing into the pockets of other shopkeepers but himself!

There is, however, another note—a welcome note—of alarm which sounds in the same Report, and this is the one to which we intend especially to refer. It concerns the ways in which the white working men, coming to a consciousness of their own rights, begin to fight that lazy idiot—the capitalist. Here our capitalist Commissioners grow quite alarmed.

The industrial situation, they tell us, is full of danger which will be felt more and more, not only in British Columbia, but also throughout the Dominion. At the present moment, they say, nearly all the industrial callings in Canada are organised, and about seventy of these organisations are *integral parts of international unions*, having their headquarters in the United States. The advantages of these international unions are such (the Commissioners say) that the Canadian working men are bound to join them. “Membership in an international organisation practically ensures work anywhere in North America, and in the event of a strike, the unionists have the co-operation and the financial assistance of a powerful body, while the supply of substitute labour is cut off to a great extent.”

Quite right! And we are pleased indeed to see the Canadian Commissioners pay such a tribute to the efficacy of the American unions in matters of labour disputes. Of course, the unions do not guarantee employment to the working man, and if the same capitalist-idiot makes up his mind to put on the screw—to shut up his mines, or to invest his capital in Japanese loans which their dear allies lend them so willingly at six per cent., at 93 instead of 100, compelling the dear yellow friend to pawn his Custom revenues—let him. . . . But so long as the capitalist-idiot is so kind as to condescend to exploit

white labour instead of yellow, the unions offer, at least, the only efficacious means to compel him to use his brains a little in the conduct of his factories or mines.

But the Commissioners hasten to give us another even more cheerful view of the situation. There is, they tell us, “another and more serious danger.” Namely, there are in the Western States of America such labour unions as are more of the type of a secret political society than of “legitimate unions.” “The primary object and common end of this class of organisation,” the Commissioners go on to say, “is to seize the political power of the State for the purpose of confiscating all franchises and natural resources without compensation, and to this class belong—the American Labour Union, the Western Federation of Miners and the United Brotherhood of Railway Employés, with an aggregate membership of between 200,000 and 300,000 men.” These unions, we further learn, are federated with each other, and “they were engaged in a conspiracy to sweep all the employés of the Canadian Pacific Railway into the United Brotherhood, and all the coal miners (of Canada) into the Western Federation, no doubt with a view to being able to stay all transportation and coal mining whenever it might appear expedient for the advancement of the common end.”

But that is not all. These terrible labour unions, we are told further on, are preparing the General Strike! In several of these organisations, “the fraternities are told to prepare for the universal strike, otherwise ‘Labour’s Gettysburg,’ which is to bring about the collapse of capitalism and the Saturnian reign of a single world-grasping organisation—a gigantic labour trust.” We should say, in fewer words, “to bring about the collapse of capitalism and the Social Revolution.”

And so, while we here complain about the slowness of the Socialistic movement and the absence of revolutionary spirit in it, there, in the depths of the labour organisations, the two great leading ideas of the International Working Men’s Association grow up again, as fresh and vigorous as ever, and the means are prepared, both in practice and in thought, for their realisation. The Commune—and by Commune they understand, not one single city, but a whole territory, with its many federated, rural and urban Communes, taking possession of all that is needed by man for living and producing, which is much better than the Commune of Paris alone. And as a means to begin that revolution, and to support it all over the world, so as to prevent the military States from sending their armies and iron-clads against the rebels (as Germany did against Carthage), the General Strike in every country of the world.

We knew that such ideas existed among American unionists, but we are very thankful to the Canadian Commissioners for having once more brought the fact to general knowledge.

No! it is not dead—by no means is it dead, that old idea which inspired the International Working Men’s Association in the years 1869 and 1870, before that calamity, the Franco-Prussian War came—that war which silenced France, threw all Europe decades backwards into militarism, and put a temporary end to the great turmoil of revolutionary thought. But—a young generation has grown in the meantime, even in France, to take the place of those bold fighters who were exterminated in the battle-fields and in the streets of Paris. And this young generation brings with it in Europe as well as in America, the same double idea, a great Federation of revolted Communes, and a General Strike as a means of paralysing capitalism, even where it would not have to face a direct uprising against its rotten rule.

*** Any books on Anarchism, Socialism, or kindred subjects forwarded (if obtainable) on receipt of order and cash. Inquiries answered on receipt of stamped envelope.

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NOTES.

PARK LANE TRIUMPHANT.

So Chinese slave-labour is an accomplished fact, and Balfour Chamberlain, and Lyttelton—the creatures of Beit and Co.—have put what may be regarded as the finishing touch to their reign of infamy. Well, "the boys of the bulldog breed" have brought things to a pretty pass, and have literally cut their own throats, for not one of them will ever be one penny the better for the war for which they went "a-mafficking," and for which they must pay in taxes and bad times. The English must have ceased to be a thinking people, or the right honourable authors of the treachery would be well on the way to impeachment by this time. As it is, the corrective, if it comes at all, will probably come from South Africa itself. Meanwhile Park Lane smiles triumphantly, and thinks to itself what a good thing it will be if the workers of England will only keep on sleeping for another twenty years, by which time Beit and Co. will have sucked all the gold from South Africa, and will be ready with new schemes in which carnage, slavery, misery and disease will prove the fertile sources of more gold and more diamonds. All this may happen—if the workers sleep. But there are signs of an awakening. May it come soon and last long.

STATE SOCIALISM IN PRACTICE.

We have been anxiously waiting for the first signs of a social revolution in Australia, where, according to the Marxist theory, it is just about due.

The Labour Party having control of the parliamentary machine, it was only reasonable to expect some bold step in the direction, let us say, of nationalisation of the land or the railways, or the initiation of some new scheme which would help on the cause of labour. Instead of this, a very feeble program has been put forth, and we are very sure that the millionaires and monopolists at the Antipodes are not trembling for their ill-gotten wealth.

In another column will be found a letter from Comrade Fleming, of Melbourne, whose expulsion from the Trades Hall Council for his Anarchist opinions will preserve the labour leaders from the taint of being in earnest about any revolutionary measures. The starving and the unemployed, he tells us, are in an indescribable condition, while "the Federal Labour leader, Watson, is banqueting with the Governor-General, Lord Northcote." Truly a typical picture of democratic politics.

And so begins the first chapter in the history of State Socialism in practice.

An Appeal for "Freedom."

The difficulty of printing *Freedom* in these times of depression compels us to ask all friends and sympathisers to render what financial assistance they can to enable us to appear regularly.

Much voluntary work must always be given to help the paper along, but as we are only workers ourselves, our pockets will not meet the deficit on each number.

Any subscriptions will be thankfully received, and should be sent to J. TURNER, 127, Ossulston Street, Euston Road London, N.W.

JOHN TURNER AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

If Anarchists believed in "votes of thanks," I should be tempted to propose one to the United States Congress for passing such a stupid law as that of March, 1903; to the Federal Government for deciding to enforce it through the Department of Commerce and Labour (?), and finally, to the Supreme Court of that country for deciding that the law is constitutional, and trial by jury and free speech are not the rights of aliens!

In the first place, nothing could have brought out the fact so clearly that it is not merely acts of personal violence that Governments fear, but the propaganda of *ideas* which expose the folly and danger of organised social and political power being placed in the hands of any man or body of men. For in this case it was not seriously urged that violence had been either used or even advocated! While at first a slight effort was made to strain things in this direction, it was afterwards entirely abandoned; and the final decision as to whether I came within the law was based entirely on my beliefs or disbeliefs! That is, because I *believe* it to be possible for society to exist and be a great deal better off without organised territorial government, therefore I disbelieve in government; and as I happen at the same time not to be a citizen of the United States of America, I and others of this way of thinking who are not citizens, or in the country more than three years, can be forcibly deported though never a word has been spoken in public or an unsocial act of any kind committed. To show the childishness of it, one has only to add that it is not a crime for citizens to hold these opinions; and the Constitution—though utterly worthless—guarantees the right of free speech and publication to *them*. Of course, those who hold these unpopular opinions are in the minority. And the majority, through the Government, has decided that it can dictate what people shall *think* who want to come into the country! They must not have opinions in accordance with the minority, or they are deported; although if citizens they would be free to think, express, or publish the ideas they are deported for holding as aliens.

Then, too, one cannot avoid feeling grateful to the Government for helping to spread our ideas broadcast. No one man—least of all myself—could have done as much to make Anarchism popular in twenty years as the United States Government did by keeping me a prisoner in Ellis Island just less than twenty weeks. Since my purpose in going was to do Anarchist propaganda, I feel it has, of course quite unintentionally, been my best friend in the work. Almost all the papers and magazines of any importance have had articles upon the case; and since I was held simply on account of what I was supposed to think and believe, or at worst because of the political principles advocated, these had to be discussed on their merits, apart altogether from anything merely incidental. All this helped to keep the issue clear, and was to the good in securing a better understanding of the Anarchist position by those who had never given the question any previous consideration. In fact, had there been a conspiracy between my friends in America and the Government to help forward the Anarchist movement, it could not have accomplished more than is has.

Again, the fact that the Department of Commerce and Labour (?) was the one that had to do the dirty work ought to make those in the labour movement pause before crying out for more labour laws. If ever the predictions of the Anarchists were verified they were on this occasion. Sooner or later the very protection which Government pretends to afford labour is used against it and twisted in favour of the privileged classes. So it has been over the immigration laws, and is likely to be all the time and in other directions. If it helps to open the eyes of those in this country who have been crying for similar laws here, a double purpose will have been served. And though it will be a long time before the mass of workpeople see these things, since they are in the main the most conservative portion of the community, still, such actions as this are likely to quicken their vision. So, while individual trade unionists and a few Central Labour bodies interested themselves on my behalf, I quite understand why it is that the Executive of the American Federation of Labour, and even the Executive of the London Trades Council, are afraid to come out openly against the Government. There are so many who have aspirations to Government appointments, who at least desire political power, and therefore feel instinctively that the more laws, and the more clamour for them there is, the better prospect for their future. However, the future work in the labour movement to teach

it the danger of relying on the State, and such object-lessons as this are more eloquent than words.

Lastly, everyone must smile at the idea of the democratic United States of America trying to stop people from thinking—at least, trying to stop those who think from daring to express their thoughts in that Republic. It is sure to increase the faith of all Conservatives and reactionaries in democratic institutions. The belief in the “majority” will become the teaching of that comic combination, the unthinking and the privileged classes everywhere.

What a sight for the gods!!

The country, partly founded by people who went there to be able to express freely what they thought and felt to be true in religious matters, now refusing the opportunity to later comers to even think or speak what they think to be right politically. True, they almost from the first refused to others what they asked for themselves. And now all Europe is laughing at the spectacle of the boastful political American Eagle being terrified at ideas that have already become a part of the intellectual life of the older countries! Politically the United States is beneath contempt; one can only mingle laughter with the cynicism the situation creates.

JOHN TURNER.

HERBERT SPENCER.

By P. KROPOTKIN.

III.

Spencer had affirmed that beyond a certain limit we have—not the *unknown*, that will perhaps be known within a hundred years—but the *unknowable*, that which cannot be known by our intelligence; whereupon Frederic Harrison, the Positivist philosopher, justly remarked to him, “Well, you seem to know a good deal about this unknown of which you make an unknowable, since you can affirm that *it can not be known*.”

In fact, in order that we may state of this beyond that it is *unknowable*, we must be sure that it differs essentially from all that we have learnt to know so far. But this is to know a very great deal about this unknowable. We are affirming that it is so different from all mechanical, chemical, intellectual, and emotional phenomena of which we have any knowledge, that it will be for ever impossible to bring it under any of these classes. To make such a statement of a thing whereof we say that we know nothing, is to involve ourselves in a flagrant contradiction. It is to say at once, “I know nothing,” and “I know enough to tell you that this is in nowise like anything I know”!

If we know anything about the universe, its past existence and the laws of its development; if we are capable of establishing the relations that exist, let us say, between the distance separating us from the Milky Way and the movements of suns, as of the molecules that vibrate in space; if, in a word, the science of the universe is possible,—it depends on a similarity of structure existing between this universe and our brain and nervous system.

If our brain were composed of matter different from that composing the universe of suns, stars, plants, and the other animals; if the law of molecular vibrations and chemical transformations differed for our brain and spinal cord from those existing outside our planet; if, lastly, light crossing the distance between the stars and my eye obeyed, on its way, other laws than those governing my eye, my visual nerve and my brain, I could never have known anything true about the universe and the laws that govern it; whereas things being as they are, we know enough to foretell innumerable things, and the very *laws* permitting us to foretell are nothing but relations apprehended by our brain.

This is why not only is there a contradiction when we talk of the unknown as the unknowable, but all that leads us to believe, on the contrary, that nothing in Nature fails to have a counterpart in our brain—part and parcel of the very same Nature, composed of the same physical and chemical elements. Therefore, nothing *need* remain unknown for ever, nothing is incapable of being represented in our brain.

At bottom, to speak of the unknowable is to return unwittingly to the great *words* of all religions; and it is because religious people will not fail to avail themselves of Spencer's error that we allow ourselves to go into these arduous details. To admit of Spencer's unknowable is always to suppose a force infinitely superior to those working in our intelligence and displayed by the activity of our brain, whilst nothing authorises us to suppose such a force. For the naturalist, the abstract, the absolute, god, the unknowable, are ever the same hypothesis that Laplace found unnecessary for his system of the world, and that we do not require to explain the universe or even the appearance of life on our planet in all its manifestations. It is a luxury, a useless superstructure, a survival that it is time to forget.

Translated from *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

(To be continued.)

LITERARY NOTES.

We would remind our readers that a cheap and revised edition of *Mutual Aid*, differing but little in appearance from the first edition, is now on sale at *Freedom* office, price 3s. 6d. The German translation, *Gegenseitige Hilfe* (by G. Landauer) has been published by Theod. Thomas, Leipzig.

Eight thousand copies of the cheap edition of *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, having been sold, a new edition is now ready; and the German translation is just out, published at Calvary, Berlin (*Landwirtschaft, Industrie und Handwerk*).

There is also a German translation of *Modern Science and Anarchism* (*Moderne Wissenschaft und Anarchismus*) published by Johannes Råde, Berlin, W., which contains a very useful little dictionary of eleven pages, added by the translator, and explaining who are the men of science named in the text, and their chief work.

How the United States Curtails Freedom of Thought, by Ernest Crosby, is an excellent summary of the case of Comrade Turner. The quotations from the leading minds of America in favour of Anarchism are alone worth reading—and remembering. It can be obtained from the Free Speech League, 175, Broadway, New York City. No price given.

Anarchism and Labour Politics in Melbourne.

DEAR COMRADE,—I have sent you papers with accounts of my expulsion from the Trades Hall Council for making a speech on the Yarra Bank exposing the political shysters in the political labour movement. It is scandalous the way they are neglecting the starving unemployed. The suffering amongst the poor is almost indescribable. Whilst this is increasing the Federal Labour leader, Watson, is banqueting with the Governor-General, Lord Northcote.

My expulsion was a trumped-up affair. I have been advocating Anarchy on the Council, and the country people imagine them to be mostly Anarchists. So, to preserve their political respectability, and to increase the chances of obtaining a parliamentary billet at £300 a year, they thought it wise to expel me and show the country that the honest horny-handed had no sympathy with the Anarchists.

The following Sunday I had the largest meeting ever held on the Yarra Bank. There were something like 8,000 or 10,000 people present listening to Anarchy. I spoke for an hour and a half, and was listened to with great attention. So my expulsion will not prevent my doing good work for Anarchy. There are only a few of us in Melbourne to keep Anarchy to the front, but we are sowing the seeds for the future harvest.—Yours fraternally,

J. W. FLEMING.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

Russia.

The rapid growth of the revolutionary movement among the different nationalities in Russia may be well judged from the creation of revolutionary organisations among the working classes, not only of Great Russia and Poland, but also of the different nationalities in the Russian Empire. It is well known that the Russian movement dates only forty years back, and was started by enlightened young people from the privileged middle classes and nobility. In spite of a cruel persecution, the movement grew little by little, but for a long time it remained confined to the great towns, embracing elements without distinction of nationality. During the last fifteen years, however, the number of workers touched by revolutionary Socialist propaganda has been increasing very rapidly in the provinces; the movement has begun to reach even the great mass of the people, and also those to whom the Russian language is not familiar. It is quite natural, then, that national and Socialist organisations have sprung up.

At present we see in Russian Poland the Polish Socialist party acting side by side with the Lithuanian and Jewish Socialist organisations. The same in the Caucasus, where Russian parties work together with Armenian and Georgian Socialists.

Notwithstanding all the efforts of the Russian Government to provoke hatred between the different nationalities, for which purpose the Minister of the Interior is lavishly spending large sums, all those national organisations act in solidarity with the Socialist revolutionary movement of Great Russia.

The latest of these Socialist organisations is that in Georgia. Its Socialist and revolutionary character may be judged from the following few abstracts of resolutions adopted at the recently-held Congress:

The Georgian Socialist-revolutionists declared themselves in solidarity with all Russian opposition and revolutionist parties fighting Russian bureaucracy and despotism, and offer them their brotherly help in the struggle.

On the *Land Question*: The socialisation of the land and the organising of co-operation among the peasants is the best means to realise social and economic equality.

On the *Labour Question*: We recognise that social and economic emancipation of the working classes must be the work of the workers themselves. . . . For this purpose the workers of the different nationalities of the Caucasus, organised on an autonomous and federalist principle and in accord with other Russian organisations, must fight Russian despotism by all revolutionary means.

We repeat that the formation of these Socialist-revolutionary parties among the different nationalities oppressed by Russian despotism is the best proof of the approaching general uprising against the existing order.

W. T.

France.

Louise Michel, after a wonderful recovery from her serious illness, is now in Paris, and expects to reach London shortly. This will be good news to all. In March her doctor signed her death warrant, but he and the world failed to grasp the mental and physical vitality of our well-loved and famous comrade. Her contempt for death is such that even that masterful person seems fain to pass her by. At all events, she is now well, and ready as ever to fight for the liberation of thought and the people. The comrades here, with their usual quick generosity, raised a fund to assist towards the expenses of her illness, but Louise, characteristically, waived the money aside, and it has been distributed among Anarchist papers and strike funds.

Throughout industrial France strikes are still the order of the day, but while sundry, owing to interference by political leaders, end in nothing, the majority win or force concessions from the masters, success being always heralded by a march of the strikers through the district beneath the folds of the Red Flag.

Germany.

German Socialists, both in and out of Parliament, have been very outspoken of late on the subject of the increased supervision of revolutionary suspects by the police. This has been inspired, as usual, by Russia; and if report be true, ex-police inquisitor Von Plehve is responsible for the circular said to have gone the round of Europe, suggesting that the Powers combine against the "Anarchists" by handing over such as are foreigners in every country to the police of their own nation. So great is the dread—not of Anarchism, but of Democracy—among the governments, that even such peaceful States as Norway, Sweden and Denmark have subscribed their adhesion to the document. To their honour, the Swedes, be it said, have protested indignantly against this further outrage against inoffensive persons, with the result that their Government now disclaims any intention of bringing new laws against the Anarchists, but only to enforce those already on the Code. So far England, France and Italy have alone ignored the Russian circular. Germany, as a military State, has always repressed every semblance of liberty and naturally seizes the fresh opportunity offered to stifle libertarian and revolutionary propaganda. Suspects are closely watched, correspondence tampered with, and strangers liable to arrest at any moment. As in Russia, the police have become omniscient. For example, three men, a Belgian and two Dutchmen, were living quietly at Bonn, when without warning their rooms were raided during their absence at work, themselves thrown into prison on leaving it, and their papers and books seized, the latter being only what are openly sold in every shop. After three weeks' imprisonment, the Belgian was conducted to the frontier, no charge whatever being made against him; the Dutchmen (each married and with a family) remain in prison. This is not an isolated case; it is the growing frequency of such attacks on the liberty of the individual that has roused the rhetoric of the German Socialist and the indignation of every right-minded citizen, for a State governed by police and military can never progress, be its wealth what it may. Well be it if England, with an international police bureau already domiciled in its midst, a new Alien Law, and proscription looming in the near future, does not soon cease to be in the forefront of the nations. As regards Socialist influence for the welfare of the worker, it is interesting to note that of the 1,405 strikes in Germany last year, only 300 were successful.

Holland.

The Anti-Military Congress opens at Amsterdam on June 26th, continuing till the 29th. Delegates from every foreign society or group will be heartily welcomed. All communications on the subject to be addressed to the Secretary, F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, Schoonkloof 12, Hilversum. The Congress has been organised by the *Vrije Socialist* group, whose paper (then called *Recht voor Allen*) was founded by comrade Nieuwenhuis 25 years ago, and lately celebrated that anniversary with great rejoicing in Amsterdam. The result of one of the recent trials of refractory conscripts, who refuse to serve, is rather quaint. In this case the youth was first given three months' imprisonment. Upon release, as he still remained obstinate, he was given another term. A third trial before a court martial condemns him to five further months of prison and deprives him of the right to serve in the army for five years!

Spain.

The peasants' strike has ended with the complete satisfaction of all their demands. Elsewhere strikes continue with varying success. The entire country seethes with discontent on which the late Royal Progress had naturally no effect. The police since the so-called attempt on Maura's life have been busy drawing up lists of revolutionary suspects, (they will be lengthy!) with a view, it is supposed, to further repression, it having been ascertained that Maura's visit to Andalusia was really for the purpose of inaugurating such by getting the king to sign a new decree against the Anarchists, in which it is stated that not only militant Anarchists but Anarchist *thinkers* will in future be punished with utmost severity.

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Printed and published by J. TURNER, 127 Ossulston Street, London, N.W.