

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

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NOTES.

Paying for the War.

The hair-splitters and the statisticians have been waxing eloquent upon methods of paying for the war. At a conference of working-class associations held at Oxford recently, Mr. Sydney Webb, that doughty champion of State regimentation, read a paper on "Industry's contribution to State maintenance." He estimated the cost of the war at £4,000,000,000, and said it represented £50 per second. Such an amount would provide freehold cottages for every one of the ten millions of families in England, but instead of the freehold cottages it seems the workers are to provide that sum by means of increased productivity. Our statistician contended that there had been hitherto too much slackness by playing golf and other games, and too much drunkenness. He urged that "collective ownership and co-operation were two remedies towards the ideal national re-organisation which would combine efficiency with liberty. An increase of 10 per cent. in productiveness would pay the whole cost of the war, as would the nationalisation of the railways or coal mines," a remedy that will commend itself to all upholders of Capitalism. But we would like to ask how can efficiency with liberty exist so long as the workers are engaged producing dividends for war loan stockholders and railway bondholders? So long as any increased productivity on the part of the producers is used for such a purpose, so long will they remain enslaved. Not more, but less liberty would result from the reorganisation of industry on the lines indicated by Sydney Webb. For while the old forms of private property remain and competitive industry exists any system of collective ownership and co-operation will be used as a means by which the wage worker will be forced to produce more.

The whole proceedings of the conference only serve to show just what may be expected after the war. Regimentation has come to stay, and can only result in less liberty and more work than in pre-war days. Unless, of course, the workers decide to take the law into their own hands and settle their accounts with the stock and bond holders.

State Regimentation

A foretaste of what may be expected after the war can be gleaned by a perusal of the General Register of the Labour Exchanges. The number of vacancies not filled by these exchanges is steadily growing, and is becoming a menace that will have to be faced in the near future. But while unemployment grows among men, increasing numbers of women are being drafted into munition works, where the women are to all intents and purposes industrial conscripts equally with their brother workers. The removal of all restriction on output and the speeding-up that is everywhere rampant are already beginning to leave their mark.

The establishment of a welfare department in connection with the Ministry of Munitions has only aimed at maintaining a standard of fitness for work, by means of which more and better work may be obtained from each unit employed. The whole of the industrial conditions to-day call for most serious consideration by every earnest thinker. The old forms of political and economic organisation have failed to guarantee to us anything but overwork and unemployment. The protective and palliative methods that have been adopted in the past have proved useless, and now the whole problem of the right to live will have to be surveyed in the light of present and possible future events. The question will have to be decided quite definitely whether we shall be regimented and organised willy nilly, solely for the benefit of the State, or whether we shall demonstrate our right to a free life untrammelled by the haunting fear of unemployment or chronic overwork. We are at present up against a reactionary force that daily becomes more powerful, and either we must end it or it will succeed eventually in making our dream of economic freedom impossible of realisation. To sit down under it even "for the duration of the war" is fatal. The real fight for freedom should be begun here and now.

Total Exemption.

The only case of absolute exemption granted by the tribunals has recently come under our notice. It relates to a man—the father of 15 children—who applied for exemption at Henley. The Board of Agriculture representative remarked that he deserved not only exemption, but high commendation. The military representative also agreed. So plainly is it recognised that the production of cannon fodder is one of the first necessities of warfare. But we do not urge this desperate remedy upon those conscientious objectors who do not desire to bear arms, and who have become applicants for total exemption.

CONSCRIPTION FOR IRELAND.

The Irish harvesters have been practically booted and hooted out of England. The reason for this treatment is the same one used for bludgeoning the Russian political refugees here into the British army. This reason is that the people in both cases are "job stealers." Until the war came it never occurred to English farmers to use British labour: they invariably depended on Irishmen. The absurdity of the job-stealing excuse is obvious.

The anti-Irish, however, have another excuse ready. They allege that these Irish harvesters should be in the British army. This is astounding. These Irishmen are invited to join an army that has been repressing their compatriots with unexampled brutality and hooliganism. Well might these conscription fanatics suggest that the conquered Belgians and Serbs should join the German army.

The *Manchester Guardian's* Dublin correspondent says: "The argument is put forward that as the insurrection has been crushed and its leaders put out of the way, the Government has nothing to fear save an explosion of public feeling, easily overcome and wisely to be ignored. The militarists are thus offering a post-mortem confirmation to the boasts of the Sinn-Feiners that they alone stood between Ireland and Conscription."

Lord Wimborne, the newly restored Herr Lieutenant of Ireland, was in favour of conscription even before the insurrection, if only the Sinn Feiners could be got out of the way. The chief jailer of Dublin Castle on the eve of the outbreak wrote quite frankly to his brother boss, the Chief Secretary: "I hear there is still a possibility of conscription [for Ireland]. All the more reason for getting our suspects packed out of the way. We shall never get a better opportunity or justification. If you agree, do write and ginger up Nathan."

Decidedly Nathan must be "gingered up." Dublin Castle has been set up again on the blood of the Sinn Feiners. Their bones are being trampled on by the Wimborne-Maxwell Zabernites. Martial law still holds high revel. Papers like the *Liberator* and the *Kerryman* are suppressed. Houses are visited for concealed weapons, and a tame blunderbuss may bring one nearer the gallows than is consistent with comfort. Where no weapons are found, the case is as bad. It is a sign of deep duplicity and cunning. Guard, take the prisoner away.

The obvious remedy for all this is conscription. The Herr Lieutenant says: "We shall never get a better opportunity or justification."

My lords and gentlemen, the prisoner was found without concealed weapons. This is strong evidence that he has hidden them most cunningly. We suggest, therefore, that he be placed in the army whilst we make a search for the said weapons.

Ireland has been found guilty of having been brutally iron-heeled by the British Army. In order to make the iron-heeling a greater success, Ireland must have Conscription. Nathan must be "gingered up."

The militarists in Ireland hold supreme sway, as did the Prussians in Zabern and other places of happy memory. Conscription is their god and Wimborne is their prophet.

Decidedly Ireland must be "gingered-up."

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The Blindness of Labour.

The Trade Union Congress held at Birmingham, September 4—9, showed how much the workers have still to learn, in spite of the events of the past two years. There were the same old speeches, the same old resolutions, and the same old committees elected as at previous Congresses, the delegates in many instances being the same officials as had attended for years past.

The lack of imagination was shown principally in the discussion on the proposal for a Workers' Peace Conference to be held at the same time and place as that of the diplomatists. The suggestion came from the American Federation of Labour, and meant that German and other enemy workers would participate in the Conference with workers of the Allied countries. The delegates, however, turned down the proposal, refusing to have any dealings with the Germans and Austrians. In doing so, they forgot that their rulers will not be so exclusive. When their Conference meets exploiters of German and Austrian workers will sit at the same table as exploiters of the workers of the Allied countries. The questions they will decide will concern the workers of all the fighting countries, and will deal principally with the best methods of exploiting the people. It is also certain that they will decide how they will help each other to resist any revolutionary movement on the part of the workers in any country. Merely political revolutions—substituting one set of governors for another—do not endanger the interests of the capitalist classes; but a social revolution, one which would sweep away the wage system and replace it by Communism, would be opposed by the united forces of all the States of Europe. They will never allow the workers to shake off their chains, and any attempt to do so would quickly show how united the capitalists are.

The Trade Union Congress also passed an overwhelming vote in favour of the formation of a Labour Ministry, which really means that the working sheep want the wolves to appoint a new organisation to decide how they shall be fattened for killing. The old organisations manage that so cleverly now that we can imagine no reason for a change.

In the discussion on the restoration of the Trade Union rules and regulations after the war, there were signs that some of the delegates did not believe in the good faith of the Government, and doubted whether the old conditions would be restored without a struggle. No one who really takes the trouble to think can possibly imagine the capitalists voluntarily giving up the advantages of the new methods, by which the amount of goods produced by each worker has been much increased. The cheapness of women's labour appeals so much to the capitalists, and the women have taken so kindly to the new forms of employment, that the men will find it impossible to get back to pre-war conditions.

These remarks apply not only to this country but to every country. The war has been fought to safeguard the interests of the capitalist and ruling classes, and the peace terms will be framed to suit that end. The workers of the Allied countries must now see that their interests can only be looked after by themselves, and if they refuse to confer with the workers of Germany and Austria, the latter will be used against them. But when they do meet, let them discuss other questions than the altering of frontier boundaries. What they have to decide is not which set of rulers and capitalists shall exploit them, but how soon they

shall put an end to exploitation and begin to practise Communism. Such a discussion would immediately show them who were their real friends and who were their enemies, and would prove to them the unity of interests of the workers of *all* countries. Let them ignore the boundaries and frontiers drawn up by their rulers, and begin the building up of a state of society in which the present struggle will be remembered only as a hideous nightmare.

THE THING THAT MATTERS.

The method of old Socrates in the Athenian Market Place is the best way to educate the worker. Short question and answer. The drawback is that so many want to talk at once, and they desire to talk each other down.

"Well," said my first questioner, "and what do you think about the Irish revolt?"

"Seeing I am against all Government," I replied, "you can't expect me to be greatly interested in a revolt which only means the pulling down of one Government and the setting up of another. You can't overthrow Governments by brute force or compulsion. You only put down one and set up another."

"Well, how do you propose to overthrow a Government?"

"By overthrowing that upon which a Government rests. How else?"

"And what is that?"

"Exploitation—or the robbery of the many by the few."

"But the Irish wish to govern themselves."

"And that means that a few of the Irish want to exploit their own countrymen."

"Well, and would not that be an advance upon their being exploited by the English?"

"I know nothing about advance in exploitation. If a few of the Irish, calling themselves a Government, set up in Dublin, and taxed the Irish people, and took Rent, Interest, and Profit from the Irish people the labouring people of Ireland would suffer much as they do now. Anyhow, as to whether the Irish people shall be eaten by their own parasites or by foreign parasites sitting at Westminster is not a question, you must admit, that ought to greatly concern an Anarchist. The Irish Parliament, so far as I am able to find out, would stand for exactly the same institution of exploitation as the English one, therefore the common people would fare just the same."

"Well, but if you did away with this exploitation there would still be some form of government."

"No, there would be administration of things for use."

"Would not this be Government?"

"No, for all Government is concerned, not with the administration of things, but with taking the things for the parasitic classes after they have been produced."

"But the Governments do administer things."

"No, not really—or only so far as it will help them to divert them to the idle classes through the channels of Rent, Interest, and Profit. Abolish these and you will find that the people who now govern would have lost their motive for governing. The people being no longer an asset of profit to them would be allowed to manage their own affairs."

"Do you think the people could manage their own affairs?"

"I certainly do, if there was not another class devising all manner of schemes to prevent them: What they call holding them down by Government. Doesn't the housewife manage the affairs of her household? What directs her? Why, their needs. Is a commune, a town, or a country anything more than a larger household? What would direct the people in this larger household? Why, their needs."

"Well now," said an American, "Don't you think that if we could do away with Kings, and Kaisers, and Tsars, and secret diplomacy, and all the Old World feudal tyrannies and replace them by Republics with a President, this would be a step in your direction?"

"How could it possibly be? How by merely changing names can you change things? The United States is a Republic, but it is based on the same system of exploitation that obtains in all the Old World nations you speak of. It is not a nation or a people in the sense of a social amalgam, with an identity of interests. It is two classes with opposing interests, like all the other old nations that you instance. Out of the war of these two classes (in America and every other country) grows the other war which is at present deluging the world with blood! Yes, the capitalist at home exploits the worker. There is the beginning. Then, as he cannot consume it all, he must invest some of the wealth he has stolen from the worker. He lends it to the capitalists of some other country that they may open up and rob the workers of their country as he has those of his own. In due season he demands his principal or dividends. If they can't pay up he bombards them with the army and navy of his Government. All

modern wars have their root in exploitation. They are waged to develop fresh markets, or to hold old ones, to exploit fresh wage slaves or fresh territory, or to compel one group of financial capitalists to pay to another its debts.

"How could the change from King to President or from Monarchy to Republic affect any of these things? If I am robbed, what matters whether the head of the firm be called William Hohenzollern or Andrew Carnegie? What matters whether the fellow who sits in the chair claims to sit there by divine right or devil right? The fact remains that he does the devilish thing upon me. The fact remains that the citizens of the free democratic Republic of America are exploited at a higher rate than any other slaves in the world. The fact remains that the slaves don't elect the President, or determine in any way the laws, but that the bosses buy all the votes of the slaves in a hundred ways, and that the President is elected and the laws determined in America, as everywhere else, by property.

"The fact is the people mistake names for things. Politics is a game to make the people mistake names for things. Oceans of blood have flowed in the past about names, but the time is at hand when the people are going to look at things (stripped of idealism, glamour, and illusion) in their raw, naked reality, and then politics, as with magic, witchcraft, and devil charming, shall take its flight into the limbo of the past. Exploitation is the thing that matters. How to get rid of the blind egotist who, not satisfied with the exploitation of animate nature and the brute creation, would maintain this mode of conduct with his fellow man. How to arrange so that all, except the sick, aged, and little children share in a collective industrial effort, and likewise in the wealth produced—this is the problem. It is not one of politics. Politics is a game of chicanery, fraud, and make-believe that kicks up the dust around it, and so hides the way to its solution."

JOHN TAMLYN.

PRISON LIFE.

Lilian Woolf and myself are free again after serving our respective sentences of two and three months imposed by the magistrate on June 24. The former was treated very kindly at Holloway Prison by everybody except the chaplain, who, in spite of her denial, in a violently rude manner insisted she was of German origin, evidently so as to create prejudice against her. It is rather strange that the chaplain at Pentonville Prison made the same attempt in my case—perhaps he thought there was some connection between "Keell" and "Kiel." My time passed as pleasantly as the confinement of prison would allow, the company of the No-Conscription Fellowship men and our comrades of the *Workers' Friend* helping to make things more cheerful. It was indeed a surprise at exercise one Sunday morning to see Shapiro, Linder, and Lenoble walking round. As we all (N.C.F. as well) worked together in the mat shop we had many opportunities for short conversations and learning what was happening outside.

The food was plain (my first week's meals were 8 ounces of bread and a pint of porridge, varied occasionally by potatoes or suet pudding), but I managed to eat most of it, the suet pudding on Wednesdays and Saturdays being the worst, and was usually returned by most of the prisoners. Many found the food insufficient, a fact recognised by the prison authorities, who granted an extra pint of cocoa and 4 ounces of bread at supper time to men engaged on certain classes of work. It was generally hinted pretty plainly, however, that this was conditional on a certain quantity of work being performed in the cells.

Many Socialists on being released from prison have suggested reforms in prison management. In my opinion the system is so hideous and dehumanising that it should be swept away entirely. "Crime" is usually attributed to lack of moral character and of a sense of responsibility on the part of the "criminals." Yet the whole atmosphere of a prison is against the growth of these particular virtues. A prisoner has to do just what he is ordered to do by the warders, and is made to feel that he is much inferior to them. As there is no freedom of action, the growth of responsibility is impossible. The rule against speech between the prisoners leads to furtive and artful methods being adopted, which is hardly likely to assist the growth of moral character. That the system is a failure is proved by its results, about five out of every six prisoners having been in prison before. The damnable hypocrisy of the clergy in this matter was called to mind every Sunday by the passage in one of the prayers used in the chapel: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Every man there was a contradiction of that prayer.

Of course, our imprisonment will have the contrary effect to that hoped for by our enemies. Our belief in the tyranny of government is quite naturally stimulated by feeling that tyranny more directly than previously, and as long as we are able we shall work for its overthrow. We both wish to thank heartily all those

comrades who have made inquiries after our health, and for their many kind and encouraging words, and can assure them that we are now as well as ever, and prepared to take our share in the fight.

T. H. KEELL.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. ASQUITH.

Special to FREEDOM.

The other evening, having nothing better to do, that is having nothing else to do, I called upon Mr. Asquith, whose name is doubtless familiar to most of the hundreds of thousands who read this journal. When he discovered that I was neither a disguised Suffragette nor a Welshman in search of a "job," he made me kindly welcome, offering me a cigar and a glass of soda water. I accepted the former only, saying that his sparkling conversation would render the sparkling liquor unnecessary.

I asked him how things were getting along, and he answered, smilingly, "Capitally, as far as I am concerned."

We were soon on quite familiar terms, as he found I was a thoroughly sympathetic listener. Of course, much of what was said I must treat as confidential, but there cannot be any objection to making public some of the many interesting things which Mr. A. told me. Indeed, I was quite candid with him, and made notes now and then, for fear I should forget or mis-report.

The conversation touched upon the necessities to success as a Parliamentary statesman—a national statesman is quite another horse.

"One of the secrets of success," said Mr. A., "is to *seem* to make definite promises, but really to be quite *indefinite*. There should always be a double meaning to political promises, so that people cannot call you a liar when they interpret your promise as it has generally been understood, instead of as you say it should have been understood. For example, all the fuss that is being made by ignorant people who declare that I promised that a single man who supported his mother should be exempted from military service. I did not make any such promise. I simply expressed my humble opinion that it would be a monstrous thing if the State were to take for military service a man in that position. Surely that was as much as I could be expected to say? If the tribunals have frequently taken the opposite view how can I help that? To tell them that they must exempt such men would be to interfere with the liberty of the members of the tribunals, and how could I consistently do that when—as we all know—we are fighting for liberty?"

That really seemed to me to be conclusive.

Later on he said: "Take the case of those greatly to be respected men who very rightly refuse to undertake military service when their consciences tell them they must not do so. Did I not use my best efforts to save them from all trouble? Need I say it hurts me deeply that many people think—nay, actually say—that I have not behaved quite straightforward in this matter? Again, if there is any error anywhere—mind, I do not say there is—is it mine? Surely not! What more could I do than legislate that sincere conscientious objectors should be exempted? But who am I to define conscience or to judge any man's sincerity? That *had* to be left to the tribunals, the members of which are carefully selected gentlemen *who have consciences themselves!* Could I do more?"

I'm afraid there are a great many unkind people who do not realise that Mr. Asquith himself has a conscience. Surely it is but fair to leave these matters to his conscience? Let us praise our Cæsar and not bury him under unmerited contumely. It is incredible, yet it is a fact, that there are many who take Mr. Asquith to be a shuffler. No! He is only a successful Parliamentarian, and he would be a traitor to his party if he were to adopt the bad habits of plain speaking and plain dealing. He would be wasting his great talents.

It is one of the tragedies of history that this great man should meet with such ingratitude, that he should be blamed for sticking to his full salary when the cost of living has gone up so high, that—but, really, I shall lose my temper if I continue to think of the wrongs and troubles which are heaped upon his head. Is there not pathos in this, which he said to me with a ring of utmost sincerity in his trembling voice: "I would gladly lay down the burden I bear and retire into private life and obscurity. But how can I desert my post? *Who* could take *my* place? Power, money, honours, what are they to me?"

And Echo answered, "What?"

As I left, Mr. Asquith asked if there was anything he could do for me, would it not have been cruel to say "No" to such a kindly offer?

W.T.S.

[A proof of this interview has been submitted to Mr. Asquith, who returned it with the comment that he must not be held to be committed or uncommitted to anything by anything that he said to our representative.—ED.]

THE BIG PUSH.

The military, reinforced by the police, are continuing their great "offensive." The first specimen of their efforts was the swoop on the garden party held in the East End to find funds for the *Voice of Labour*. This should take its place at the head of the list of victories chronicled in a leading article by the editor on the raid of May 5 at these offices.

On Saturday, August 26, after ten o'clock in the evening, the strategists put their plans into operation. Two cordons, consisting of police, mounted and foot, and soldiery were arranged, one drawn across each end of the street. The General Staff, headed by the local Provost Marshal and Inspector Sandercock, of the Yard, then primed their weapons and made a flank attack on the side door of the Assembly Rooms. Meeting with no opposition, they entered, and immediately declared a blockade of all exits and entrances, which was put into effect at once. The Herr Provost Marshal then read a paper and all young men of military age were examined. Twenty-seven having been found guilty of not carrying any incriminating documents on them associating themselves with the army or the Compulsion Act, they were at once marched away. The police section were not so easily satisfied: evidently they are not too well supplied with reading matter in spite of their almost daily raids. Consequently Sandercock generously invited them to help themselves to the books and pamphlets on the literature stall. They took the greater portion and walked out with a satisfied smile.

Of the prisoners of war only nine were retained, and the others subsequently released. The guilty ones were brought up at Thames Police Court on the Monday, and the following were fined forty shillings and handed over to the military:—Alfred W. Fayle, Fred Wells, Alex. Bertoli, Will Brown, Edmund Howarth, Maurice Einberg, and W. M. Savage. Three of these were, however, medically rejected, and the rest remained in the army along with Alfred Corum, who was taken at Finsbury Music Hall round-up the week following.

The remaining two, H. G. Russell and E. Fergusson, were remanded and brought up again on Friday. Russell was discharged, having appealed to a Tribunal, who decided that he was not amenable to military service. Fergusson's claim that he was an Irishman and therefore exempt was disallowed. The magistrate said: "There is no time limit in the words 'ordinarily resident in this country.' If a man comes to work here and is uncertain how long he will remain I think he is ordinarily resident. I believe you come under that head, and you will therefore be handed over to the military."

It should be remarked that during the trial on Monday Sandercock made a statement that "the garden party was in aid of the *Voice of Labour*, a paper that had been twice suppressed." This statement that the *Voice* has been suppressed is a sheer fabrication and just so much braggadocio. The *Voice* has never suspended publication, nor has FREEDOM. But Sandercock is the young man who is going to have all rebel papers suppressed by the end of the war. Consequently he has to impress his superiors that our papers are as dead as door-nails. We can afford to smile at such boasting. Both papers will continue so long as our financial backing is substantial. We are not downhearted, our serenity is unruffled, but to print the papers costs money, and we need all we can get right now. The authorities practically challenge us to keep our papers going. We have no doubt our readers will back us up right handsomely.

Ours was not the only drive organised by the British Black Hundreds. Immediately after the raid at Bow, the police and military all over the country took up the idea with enthusiasm. There was no Parliament sitting, so they began to get busy. Blackpool Pier was blockaded. Picture shows were raided all over the place. At one of these the police got the operator to throw on the screen this impertinent message: "All men of military age stand up please," and then the lights were turned on for the dirty business. At Tunbridge Wells Opera House fifty young men went more or less quietly to the police shop. Cafés and restaurants, boxing and billiard halls, cricket and football matches were swooped upon. Stray young men all over the country were held up, and are still being held up. The press is silent, except in the case of those who have appeals coming and have no documentary evidence thereunto. It is cheering to note that in spite of the advantage the conscriptionists had with an unraided press, there are still so many "shirkers" at large to give them the cold shivers. What a patriotic nation we must be when we have to be rounded up and driven to support our victorious army at the front!

Just as we go to press we learn that the police raided Stockport Communist Club and arrested W. Jackson, H. Holt, C. B. Warwick, Hopkins, and Ellesbury. All were fined and handed over to the military.

Freedom of speech died long ago, the freedom of the press is going, freedom of the person is being lost. And the Allies of a

Russianised Prussianism are putting the flower of these islands in prison or in the trenches, so that there may be no opposition to the tyranny they have let loose. But they will not and must not win. A press that is not afraid to say that two and two make four and none over sends cold shivers down their backs. And this is one reason why we intend to keep on keeping on. L. A. M.

OUR SPECIAL APPEAL.

We are glad to announce that the special appeal for our printing funds has met with an excellent response, and we take the opportunity to tender our heartiest thanks to all comrades and well-wishers who have subscribed. The fund is, however, still open, and if the enthusiastic support continues we hope soon to be able to make FREEDOM an eight-page paper again.

In the present circumstances we regret to intimate to our readers that the Group concerned has decided to suspend publication of the *Voice of Labour* for a short period. Our rebel contemporary will, however, resume at the first favourable opportunity. The Group will meanwhile concentrate their efforts on FREEDOM.

A list of donations to our special appeal is appended, including all sums received to time of going to press. We trust to be able to publish a longer list in our next issue.

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