

Freedom

C.I.R.A.

VOL. XXXII.—No. 349.

JUNE, 1918.

MONTHLY: TWO PENCE.

NOTES.

Rejected Peace Offers.

The French Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs has published some remarkable statements concerning Austria's peace offer in 1917. The proposal, it appears, was only discussed by three of the Allies; viz., France, Italy, and Britain. America, Russia, and Belgium were not notified concerning the offer, and the final decision was ultimately given by the first-named countries, which means that half a dozen men had it in their power to reject peace. The *Nation* for May 11th quotes the lost opportunities of peace by negotiation: "(1) Autumn and winter of 1916 Germany's offer of entry into a League of Nations and a Peace Conference. Countered by the 'Knock-out Blow' interview. (2) President Wilson's appeal for a statement of aims. Answered by the Ambiguous Note. (3) The joint appeal in the opening months of 1917 of the Pope's Circular Note, the Russian plea for a peace of no annexations, the Socialist invitation to Stockholm, and the Austrian intervention. All rejected, Stockholm by Mr. George, the Pope's and Russia's appeals *sub silentio*, the Austrian effort by France and Italy, with Mr. George's final assent. (4) The advance of German Liberalism, through the Reichstag resolutions, and the obscure tenders to M. Briand. Generally discouraged, and finally giving place to the German reaction. (5) The Czernin-Hertling answer to the four Wilson propositions. Rejected in the Versailles manifesto." Yet still the workers of this and the belligerent countries submissively continue their munition-making, and Germany finds herself still strong enough to drive home her great offensive on the Western front. Thus the nations continue starved and suffering, while a handful of statesmen and soldiers use them like pawns in a sinister game, and the idea that it is the people themselves who must make peace has not yet penetrated the minds of the masses. But the reckoning will be paid in full one day. It is now merely postponed.

The Allies and Russia.

Japan is still casting covetous eyes towards Siberia. She has just concluded a treaty with China under which they are ready to take military action in Siberia if and when desired by all the other Allies. The *Daily Mail* in recording this fact in the issue of May 22nd states that "The Cossack Colonel Semenoff is thought to be doing effective work along the Trans-Siberian Railway . . . and is becoming more and more of a rallying point for sane and influential Russian elements, who see ruin for their country in Bolshevism. The Allies might find it more practicable to support Semenoff's campaign than intervene in Siberia on their own account." We must thank this lusty defender of Capitalism for the brutal truth that the Allies intend to assist the reactionary forces in Siberia and help to restore Capitalism in Russia. The Bolsheviks themselves assert that most of the attempts at counter-revolution have come from Allied reactionaries. Allied naval contingents continue to occupy Vladivostok, and apparently military action will be undertaken when the outburst of hostile public opinion in this country and America has died down. We can therefore only look to the prompt action of the Russian Revolutionists to make any such counter-revolutionary expedition disastrous to the Allied forces which are to be used as debt collectors.

That "German Plot"!

The Government has at last published its justification for the wholesale arrest and deportation of Irishmen. The details of the so-called German plot leave only one thought in our minds, viz.: That the Government must have been singularly bankrupt when it was forced to publish such a document as evidence of the

guilt of the interned Irishmen. Even the *Daily News* describes the publication of the disclosures as an insult to the intelligence of the public. Surely the Government could have decided upon a more clever ruse in order to justify its action. The issue of the present document as evidence is pitiable, and as such will it be criticised by all thinking men and women in Britain and Ireland. This attempt to divide the anti-conscriptionists in Ireland will fail. It is merely a great tribute to the too-successful Irish anti-conscription demonstration. It speaks volumes for the perfect way our Celtic brethren have organised their forces. That the Government should have found it expedient to arrest and deport secretly over one hundred Sinn Feiners on the strength of the hashed-up evidence given at the Casement trial of 1916 is too ridiculous. The Irish being possessed of one great national virtue, a keen sense of humour, may be trusted to improve the occasion, and we do not envy the position of the Government in the coming months. One thing is certain, Ireland is at last winning her freedom from British rule, and the fact that her leaders have been deported will but add increased zest to the gallant fight against her ancient enemy. But the Irish workers must remember the enemy within.

Mob Attacks on C.O.'s.

The inspired attacks on Conscientious Objectors at Knutsford and Wakefield remind us that now, as ever, the mob is ready to crucify the man who dare possess that normally undeveloped thing—a conscience. The fact that these men have borne hardship and ignominy for their convictions makes no impression on their dull brains, and there is always the Gutter Press ready to lash them into fury against the few men who have preserved their sanity during the war. But, jeered at and stoned and robbed by the mob to-day, we can yet foresee the time when the very ideas held by these men, who suffer for conscience sake, may become the rallying point of a great movement towards liberty of thought and action. "The mills of the gods grind slowly."

Freedom to Oppress.

A recent writer in the *Manchester Guardian* has some trite things to say about those two much-hackneyed words, Democracy and Discipline. He tells us that it is natural for those who are established in comfort to praise "order," which for them means merely security of possession. Britain, France, and America, he contends, are not democracies but plutocracies masked under democratic forms. "Is, therefore," he argues, "the 'order' of Tsarism to be held of higher worth than the 'chaos' of Revolution? . . . We who are comfortable set too high a value on our comfort. The millions who have never known it, here and elsewhere, are justified in holding our timidities as nothing against even the chance of a finer, braver society. . . . Too long the cry for freedom has meant but the cry for power to oppress those who differ from us. But freedom is only possible to the man who can bind himself, and, 'fearing only fear,' has no dread of his fellow-men."

The Woman Pays.

The attempt to resuscitate the C.D. Acts in this country has led to a spirited protest by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene. In spite of the efforts made in Parliament to minimise the evil effect of this panicky measure, the Association points out that the regulation applies to *all* women and only to women. It is, therefore, a piece of legislation of the worst type that all decent-minded men and women will vigorously oppose. For, as a writer to the *Manchester Guardian* of April 8th puts it, it is an abrogation of the first principle of British justice, that "An accused person is to be assumed innocent till he has been proved guilty." But this measure, like many others adopted during the war, only goes to prove how little of real liberty still remains with us. The longer the war lasts the more terribly both men and women suffer at the hands of those who sanctioned the war.

RECONSTRUCTION.

In criticising the programme of "Reconstruction" of the Labour Party in the April issue of *FREEDOM* we pointed out the uselessness of retaining capitalist institutions.

This war may well prove the breakdown of the capitalist organism, and the event can mean to the toiling masses of Europe either a great triumph or a terrible disaster. The issue will depend upon our capacity for utilising the forces at work. For just as chemistry teaches us that at the first moment of decomposition the very gases that are thus liberated themselves become, by uniting with other chemical substances, the basis of new life-giving elements, so out of the old crumbling body of Capitalism may be created those new vital forms that will prove the foundations of future society.

But we admit that many obstacles confront us. The mass of mankind—thanks to centralised forms of organisation—is so used to allowing itself to be locked after that it will be difficult to persuade it to act for itself. Tradition dies hard, and it may be a difficult task to persuade the worker to have faith in himself rather than in some Parliamentary or Labour representative elected by ballot. But the fact remains, all the old so-called democratic forms must be swept away, and new ways and means investigated.

To begin with, the idea of a centralised government must be dismissed. When the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly and substituted a government of Soviet Committees, many Socialists and democrats in this country expressed great surprise, because to them a freely elected Constituent Assembly was the last word in popular and democratic government, but they did not realise that the overthrow of the bourgeoisie made such a body an anachronism—it had become already obsolete before it was born. As a political form it belonged to a democratic capitalist state of society, and the impetus of the November revolution had carried the economic forms far beyond this. Thus the local Soviets, composed entirely of Russian workers, best gave political expression to the existing economic form of organisation. A Constituent Assembly fashioned upon the model of Western Parliaments would, sooner or later, have proved its inutility. There is an old but true saying about putting new wine into old bottles which somewhat aptly describes the case.

It is therefore very essential that not only all centralised government must go, but also all State institutions, and that octopus of bureaucracy that has so stealthily been embracing us during the past decade or so. That doubt of the usefulness of the State has at last penetrated the public mind is evidenced in an article which appeared recently in the *Nation* under the heading of "The Form of the New State." A few sentences may prove instructive:

"Everywhere State organisation is discredited. Even the consumer, whose guardian it affects to be, holds it in derision. Most business men demand that the whole of this incompetent machinery be swept away as soon as the war is ended. . . . It is everywhere recognised that the spawning of new *ad hoc* controls has been terribly wasteful and obstructive to efficient production. . . .

"There are two issues of critical significance which underlie a competent progressive government. The first relates primarily to the machinery of administration. It consists in converting it from a mechanism into a living, growing organism, not a low organism spawning innumerable other low organisms, as we see in the new Munitions Department, for example, but a reasonable organism, thinking out its lines of growth and planning its development with foresight. Can this creative power be got into a machine? Can a bureaucracy cease to be wooden and routine, and become intelligent and even sympathetic as to human needs? . . . The other issue: If this enlightened creative administration be practicable, are we content to have all these fine things done for us by governmental experts, without taking any hand in the business ourselves? Might not this superhuman bureaucracy prove here, as in Prussia, to be a substitute for democracy, instead of a servant of it? To humanize a machine was recognised as a dangerous experiment. At best, it seems to yield a benevolent tyranny; at worst, what, by an accepted metathesis, is called a Frankenstein."

Here we have the whole case against the State very ably summed up. But though there are many in our midst, Labour men and others, whose destructive criticism is very damning, yet few possess the vision to formulate a workable substitute for the State. The whole kernel of the matter is put by the writer in the *Nation* when he asks: "Are we content to have all these fine things done for us by governmental experts?" He realises not only the costliness and the inefficiency of the average permanent official, but the evil effect upon the subject who is thus robbed of

all initiative in affairs which concern him most nearly. Now it is just that initiative which it is the aim of Anarchist Communists to restore. We therefore suggest that as the present economic and political forms have failed to promote human well-being, they must be replaced by industrial, social, and political forms based upon free association and co-operation. But such forms are impossible to-day while society is based upon capitalist exploitation. We cannot graft new skin upon old diseased bodies. The social cancer is too deeply rooted for such treatment. The whole social structure must be destroyed. And though the word seems anathema to the Labour Party, yet, unfortunately for them, it must be spoken. Revolution is the only course left open to all those who really desire to get at grips with facts and achieve practical results.

This, of course, means the overthrow of government and the destruction of the State. The task of maintaining an adequate supply of food, clothing, and dwellings for the workers will then confront us. These things, we know, will not be gained by sending Socialist or Labour representatives to Westminster to pass resolutions and legislate for us. Neither will they be achieved by any new body of permanent officials preparing a brave array of percentages and averages. Instead, our hope will rest upon the organisation of local communes, whose business it will be to ascertain the needs of the people and get into touch with other communes. The workers will likewise organise co-operatively in the factories and the workshops, and will exchange their products with those of the agricultural groups. This, then, is a crude outline of what might be done in order to substitute government and bureaucracy for a form of organisation based on an understanding of human needs and happiness.

The chief point to remember is that compared with the permanence of certain primitive communistic societies, and even modern ones, capitalist organisation is of but recent growth, and it should be no very difficult matter to free ourselves of the legacy of evil qualities inherited from such a régime. True morality—that founded upon the good of all—should rapidly develop once the revolution creates a suitable soil, and the problem of dealing with the so-called unemployable, the lazy, the moral perverts should not prove insurmountable barriers to the formation of a society founded upon rational lines. At any rate, the arguments in favour of a communistic society so far outweigh those in favour of reform drawn up in the Labour Party's programme that the worker would do well to ask himself how far he is justified in bolstering up any form of capitalism by means of such reform.

M.B.H.

WASTE AND WANT.

Read this from "*Collier's Magazine*" (New York):—

"Three years ago the Australian Government bought and contracted for all the wheat crop of that country. Then it bought some twenty-one ships to carry the wheat to Europe. But the submarine has had its way with those ships, and to-day not more than four or five of them are left. Meantime the wheat piled up along the Australian docks and railroads. They put some of it in sacks, made walls of the sacked wheat, and poured the rest within the walls. There were great piles of wheat ten or twenty feet high and wide, and more than ten miles long. Soon mice appeared. They began to gnaw through the bags, and the hempen walls collapsed. Under such favourable conditions, the mice multiplied until they became a plague. The Government put its shoulder to the perfectly serious business of fighting mice. It had special ways of catching them, and crews of men with specially constructed incinerators. They burned five to ten tons of mice in a single night. But the mice continued to increase."

Now read this from Sydney "*Sun*," of February 5, 1918:—

"The crowd of women and children who rake the garbage bins at the Sydney Municipal Markets in search for vegetables and fruit is on the increase. This morning there were from 100 to 150 present. Many of them were scantily clothed, and it was common to see the children in rags, bareheaded, and without boots. Some women carried babies in arms, while others wheeled perambulators. All had sugar-bags and carryalls. The children turned out the boxes, while the women cut away the diseased portions from potatoes, onions, pumpkins, and tomatoes. Young women and children were seen picking vegetables out of gutters, while three women, aged between 65 and 70 years, were noticed taking cabbage from manure heaps."

To feed these hungry people with the unshipped wheat would be too much to expect of a Government official; besides, it would only "encourage idleness" in the "thrifless" poor.

RUSSIAN NOTES.

Many otherwise well-meaning and intelligent men and women spend an appreciable amount of time nowadays in reading the ordinary Capitalist Press, which, in addition to its habitual methods of direct falsehoods, misleading suggestions, and constant suppressions of the real facts of modern life, is now still more directly controlled by the Jingo politicians in all countries, and is full of the kind of ideas these persons want the mass of people to be thinking and believing. Those who spend time in this way must find it very difficult to avoid fits of depression, caused by the strangely distorted view of the real world they gain thereby. They sometimes miss the one encouraging point in it all, which is that our rulers are absolutely blind to the real forces at work in the living world of to-day, as is shown by their actions with regard to the situation created by the Russian Revolution, and now by their apparent desire to add to their military and moral burdens by extending the war to Ireland.

As we realise the mentality of our politicians of all parties, and see them blundering on from one stupidity to another, always in antagonism to the nobler and finer elements of human nature, and always in support of an order of things already decaying, and based upon a set of ideas that has long since been weighed in the balance and decisively rejected by human intelligence, let us call to mind the other fact that the first stage of successful Social Revolution has begun in Russia, and has given to all men and women the first dramatic and unmistakeable announcement that the final overthrow of capitalism and the State superstition is at hand.

We have often enough had pictures of the Russian peasants as a great mass of ignorant people, unable to read or write, and steeped in mediæval superstition, with a range of ideas bounded by the priest and their "little father" the Tsar; any clear-sighted revolutionary men amongst them were understood to be a most insignificant handful, and this position was supposed to be intensified amongst the Cossacks by a feudal military slavishness. Yet the moment the deadweight of governmental tyranny is kicked away, and they first begin to grasp the fact, which is always and everywhere true, that in reality the power lies with the workers and producers at once to order their own lives in accordance with their real needs and opportunities, all these people come into view, and we see them facing the facts of life and society sanely, and in the midst of enormous difficulties and complications steadily working in a practical way to bring about a free and decent life for all.

The reports of Congresses of Workmen, Peasants and Soldiers in the Cossack lands, as elsewhere, are most encouraging. Here we no longer see the pitiful exhibitions which political labour leaders have given the world in all countries during the last few years, of the shallowness of their ideas, and the surprising degree in which they lack ordinary intellectual courage and honesty. The enormous development Co-operation is making, and its growing control by the labour element in the movement, as distinct from the more bourgeois current of ideas that was prominent in some parts of it before the Revolution, are also very inspiring.

When the second Congress of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies met in November, 1917, to consider the Land Question, the "Editorial Committee of the Bulletins of the All-Russian Council of Peasants' Deputies" reported that they had received from 242 district meetings, held throughout the country, suggestions for dealing with this question, which they embodied in the following proposals:

"(1) The right of private land ownership is abolished for ever; land can be neither sold, nor bought, nor leased, nor mortgaged, nor appropriated in any other way. The whole of the land of the State, of the appanages of the Crown, of the monasteries, of the churches, as well as majorats, lands in conditional possession or endowment of persons or concerns, privately owned land, and land belonging to public bodies, and to the peasants, and so on, is herewith expropriated without any compensation whatever, and it becomes the property of the whole people, and is transferred for use to all who till it. Those who have suffered from this expropriation are entitled to public relief, but only for a time which may be necessary to allow them to adapt themselves to the new conditions of existence.

"(2) All the bosoms of the earth, ores, naphtha, salt, etc., as well as forests and waterways, having an all-national importance, pass into the exclusive possession of the State. Small rivers, lakes, and forests pass into the possession of local communes, subject to the control of the local authorities.

"(3) Highly cultivated estates, orchards, plantations, nurseries, hothouses, etc., are not to be subjected to division, but are to remain as model estates, and they pass into the possession either of the State or of the local communes, in accordance with their size and importance.

"(4) All kind of breeding stations of horses, cattle, poultry, etc., whether belonging to the Crown or to private persons, are confiscated, and they become the property of the whole people, and pass either into the exclusive possession of the State or of the communes. The question of compensation to be decided by the Constituent Assembly.

"(5) The whole of the inventory of the confiscated estates, both live and dead, passes into the exclusive possession of the State, or of local communes.

"(6) All Russian citizens, irrespective of sex, willing to till the soil with their own labour, or with the assistance of their families, or in company with other persons, are entitled to receive land for use and for the duration of time they are able to till it. No hired labour is allowed. (In case of any member of a village commune becoming an invalid, the commune must come to his assistance by cultivating his land till the time of his recovery).

"(7) The possession of land is to be equal, the land, i.e., is distributed amongst the tillers, in accordance with local conditions, in equal plots, the standard share being either a plot a man is capable of working with his own labour, or a plot required to feed himself and his family. The forms of land tenure are to be decided freely by the local commune, whether individual, communal, co-operative (artel) or any other.

"(8) The whole of the land, after its expropriation, forms a National Land Reserve. The distribution of this reserve amongst the tillers is effected by the local authorities.

"(9) In case the available Land Reserve in any given locality is not sufficient to provide for the local population, the excess population is provided for by emigration organised by the State, and the latter bears all the cost of the emigration and settlement of the emigrants on the new land.

These suggestions were adopted by the Congress, and it was one of the first acts of the Bolsheviks to order this Land Decree to be put into immediate operation by Rural Land Committees and District Councils of Peasant Deputies, every care being taken to prevent unnecessary damage to the land, buildings, machinery, cattle, stores, etc., now become the collective property of the peasants.

An enormous amount of butter is produced yearly in Siberia. In 1917, 95 per cent. of the total was manufactured in Co-operative Creameries (there were 2,500 creameries and stores belonging to the Union of Siberian Creamery Associations), and it was sold both at home and abroad without the intervention of middlemen. The peasant societies have organised their own village stores, have large wholesale stores, and are now running their own factories and works.

Conferences were held amongst the forest workers in the North of Russia at Vologda and Archangel in November and December, to plan the best and most efficient methods of organising this industry in the interests of the actual workers themselves, of preventing their Unions from becoming small trading companies and preventing the introduction of paid labour and children's work, and to take entire control of the immense timber industry of the country.

The villagers of the Altai Mountains organised in their district within the first six months after the Revolution 170 libraries, and 130 educational circles; they bought 42,000 books, and published 905,000 copies of 26 different leaflets on various subjects. These were sent to 1,200 Co-operative Societies, and to schools and village organisations. Their committee has ordered in America 100 lanterns, 300 cinematographs, and 500 films of historical, industrial, scientific, and social subjects. Besides a weekly paper, *The Altai Peasant*, they publish a weekly article in Esperanto in various Siberian papers. Those of our comrades acquainted with Esperanto should get into touch with them.

Already more than 50,000 separate Co-operative Societies are at work in Russia. Reports show that the more Co-operative Societies the more libraries, and the more libraries the more Co-operative Societies. Were English Co-operators alive to the real facts of the situation a wonderful opportunity certainly exists already for ousting the capitalist from an immense department of international exchange. These organisations would undoubtedly welcome an arrangement for exchanging goods with English or other Labour organisations of a productive and Co-operative character. It is high time working people in all countries awoke from the horrible nightmare Governments have created, and realised the possibilities that lie so easily within their reach.

In the more definitely political field these "backward workmen and ignorant peasants" have already freed themselves from the Parliamentary superstition, and in the many independent but federated City Communes that have been established, life seems to go on wonderfully well without police, or lawyers, or judges, or even bourgeois Town Councils.

All revolutionists would be well advised to "keep their eyes on Russia." F.C.C.

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

Monthly, Twopence; post-free, 2½d. Annual Subscription, post-free, 2s. 6d.

Wholesale price, 1s. 6d. per dozen (13) post-free in the United Kingdom.

All communications, exchanges, etc., to be addressed to

FREEDOM PRESS, 127, Ossulston Street, N.W. 1.

The Editors are not necessarily in agreement with signed articles

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THE REAL PRO-GERMANS.

The term "Pro-German" is usually hurled at all those who are either opposed to the war or are in favour of what is termed "peace by negotiation." Those who use this phrase mean that the men or women who are called "Pro-German" are sympathetic to the German Government and its methods of government and warfare. But as a matter of fact ninety-nine out of every hundred of them are bitterly opposed to Germany's rulers, and on that account are also opposed to the war and to the politicians here in England who call for a war to the bitter end, because the longer the war lasts the more nearly do the methods of our own rulers resemble those of the Germans.

When the war started we were told by many writers—oh, so many!—that the rulers of the German Empire had educated the people into believing that the "State" was almost of divine origin, and that individuals must subordinate everything to maintaining the supremacy of the State in every detail of their life. At school, at college, in the church, the army, the navy, and in the press this vile doctrine was preached day by day, we were told and long extracts from German writers were printed in the capitalist press to show how thoroughly they agreed with this view of life. And then we were all urged to help to kill this degrading and liberty-destroying doctrine by joining the army or going into munition factories. Our rulers and the rulers of our Allies also protested against this worship of the State, and vowed they were determined to spend their last shilling or franc or rouble in the war so as to save the German people as well as ourselves from the influence of such abase "materialistic" doctrine.

We Anarchists quite agreed that belief in the State had been raised by Germans into the place previously occupied by belief in God, and have many times criticised the absurdity of German Social Democrats putting forward State ownership or State control as a means of saving the workers from the oppression of capitalism. But this did not prevent us doubting the sincerity of our own ruling class in this matter. We knew that for some time a large and influential section of the commercial and industrial magnates in this country had been studying the methods which were in use in Germany and which had helped that country to build up a very successful and enormous trade in all parts of the world. Just previous to the outbreak of war English politicians (Lloyd George in particular) had commenced the introduction of these methods under the name of "social reform." State health insurance, State unemployment insurance, and other "Labour" legislation was put in force; and so as to recommend it to the workers and employers in this country, they were told by Lloyd George how he had consulted German employers and German trade unionists, who had assured him that these things had worked most successfully in their country.

Since the war started, however, the glorification of the State has proceeded with immense strides, and all parties (Labour, Liberal and Conservative—even many Socialists) have insisted that every thing we possess must be put at the disposal of the "State." And Germany, instead of being used as an argument against this State worship, is now put forward as the great example we have to follow. Germany has military conscription; we must have military conscription. Germany has industrial conscription; we must have industrial conscription. Germany makes Parliament

the tool of the War Lords; we must make Parliament the tool of the War Cabinet. Even Germany's study of science, once denounced as "materialistic," is now held up to us as the real cause of her military success. Never mind if these methods will make the people into automatons, to be driven to death at the word of command. We must win the war! Though the domination of the State has killed initiative and made the German people into a mass of "soulless slaves," as we are frequently told, we must adopt the same methods if we would win the war.

With this idea in view, our ruling clique have steadily followed in Germany's footsteps, and now are really and truly "Pro-Germans." In the last four years, under the Defence of the Realm Act ("Dora"), they have issued innumerable Orders in Council and Regulations which are as despotic as anything issued in Germany. What we shall eat and drink, what we shall wear, what work we shall do, what we shall say or print—everything is now decided for us. The State, in the interests of the ruling clique, will in future control our youth of both sexes until eighteen years of age, when the military will take the sons and the factories the daughters of the workers. For the same reason we are all to be registered and labelled and drilled to make us into the same kind of automaton which they pretend to despise in Germany. They hate the Russian Revolution, as its continuance would upset all these plans; and when the war is over—if not before—we shall see the commercial and industrial classes of this country working hand in hand with those of the Central Powers in framing legislation with which they hope to subdue all revolutionary spirit in the working class. All gratitude for their immense sacrifice and sufferings will be forgotten in the great desire to exploit the workers more than ever in order to pay the enormous debts incurred in the war. And for this purpose English capitalists will rely on the methods which have been so successful in Germany.

Our rulers are agreed with those of Germany in making the State an idol which all must bow down and worship, and for that reason we say they are really and truly "Pro-Germans," as also are all those who support the State.

BOLSHEVIKS AND ANARCHISTS.

The inevitable evolution of the Bolshevik Government is happening in Russia. All Governments are based on force, and they use that force to crush their opponents. As Anarchists are opposed to government, our Russian comrades were bound to be attacked by Lenin and Trotsky sooner or later. In parts of Russia which are far from Moscow or Petrograd the people are not so much under the influence of the Government, but in these two cities the Bolshevik Government is supreme. Recently we read that the Anarchist daily in Petrograd had been suppressed and many comrades arrested, and in the press on May 15 a telegram from Petrograd announced that on the previous Sunday fighting had taken place in Moscow between Bolsheviks and Anarchists. It was stated that Soviet troops surrounded the buildings occupied by the Anarchists, and as they refused to surrender, guns and armoured cars fired on them. The Anarchists replied with machine guns and grenades, but were overpowered and compelled to surrender. The casualties have not yet been made known, but one account said that 500 Anarchists were arrested.

Communication with Russia is so slow and the censorship so drastic that we shall probably not know for some time what was the immediate cause of the fighting. In the meantime it is interesting to read that, according to the *Novaja Zhizn* of March 29, the Soviet Government "have no objection to trying to discover a definite *modus vivendi* with the more educated and creative sections of the bourgeoisie." This means in other words that the Bolshevik Government is going to strengthen its position by calling in some members of the commercial and industrial class, an admission that it will no longer be a purely working-class Government. And we learn now from a Russian wireless message that the Russian Government "has decreed a partial compulsory call to arms in two industrial provinces and in two provinces fertile in corn." Unless the peasants and workers resist this new conscription, in a very short time there will be little to distinguish the Russian Government from any other Government. Probably the reason the Anarchists were attacked was because they exposed this reactionary tendency of the Bolsheviks.

ON DEMOCRACY.

AN OPEN LETTER TO H. G. WELLS.

Dear Mr. Wells,—

Thank you for your recent newspaper article* entitled "What Democracy Means." Of all those who are fighting—or rather, urging others to fight—"to make the world safe for Democracy," you alone, as far as I am aware, have had the courage (some would say the foolhardiness) to tell the world, clearly and unequivocally, exactly *what* it is to be made "safe" for; in other words, exactly what aim those amazingly strange folk, the War-Idealists, are seeking to attain on the other side of the sanguinary torrent through which they have set themselves the painful task of wading, albeit in the questionable company of victory-mongering profiteers and War-Materialists of every description. This fact makes your article of more than ordinary interest to those who are *not* Democrats—nor indeed "crats" of any kind, since the only "cracy" which would adequately express the idea of *self-rule* has been so shamefully mishandled by the fraternity of professional word-purveyors that it is lost to us beyond all hope of redemption: I refer, of course, to the word "autocracy."

You begin your article by a somewhat goodhumouredly-contemptuous dismissal of the democracy of the small Greek republics of antiquity. The ancient Greeks, poor fellows, had "no railways, telegraphs, telephones, books or newspapers," their affairs were so pitifully *small*; whereas the modern State is so vast, so enormous, that its business can only be conducted by means of "a system of ministries." But are you not falling into the common fallacy of belauding mere hugeness as if it were genuine *greatness*? (Think of the "great city" acclaimed by Walt Whitman!) There are some of us, even in these modern days, who would willingly forego the telephone, the Plute Press, yea, and the Ministry of Munitions itself, if such self-denial could further the development of "the glory that was Greece."

Thus, at the outset, you appear to be championing the idea that this clay-footed Idol, this top-heavy Monstrosity, the modern State, has "come to stay," and you are therefore in diametrical opposition to those whose viewpoint may be expressed by the terse dictum of Ibsen: "The State must go!" However, let us proceed to examine your summary of the existing ideas as to government in a modern country; for the sake of clearness, I print your "diagram" in full:

Class I.—It is supposed that the common man can govern

- (1) Without further organisation (Anarchy).
- (2) Through a majority vote by delegates.

Class II.—It is supposed that the common man cannot govern and that government, therefore, must be through the agency of Able Persons, who may be classified under one of the following sub-heads, either as

- (1) Persons elected by the common man, because he believes them to be persons able to govern—just as he chooses his doctors as persons able to secure health, and his electrical engineers as persons able to attend to his tramways, lighting, etc., etc.;

- (2) Persons of a special class, as, for example, persons born and educated to rule (*e.g.*, Aristocracy), or rich business adventurers (Plutocracy), who rule without consulting the common man at all.

To which two sub-classes we may, perhaps, add a sort of intermediate stage between them—namely,

- (3) Persons elected by a special class of voter.

Refraining for the moment from any comment on Class I (1), let me join you in rejecting, though on different grounds, the form of government which you describe as "Delegate Democracy" [Class I. (2)]. This is none other than the old, time-honoured plan of "counting heads to save the trouble of breaking them"; it is what Wilde so aptly designated "the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people." The underlying idea, of course, is that if the contending parties were to resort to violence, the more numerous party would prove victorious, and that the minority therefore ought to submit as soon as its numerical inferiority had been demonstrated by a show of hands. *It will not do*, not because it may possibly mean "inefficiency," as you contend, but because it can, and ultimately does, mean the crushing (or attempted crushing) of minorities by Brute Force, as witness the treatment of anti-militarists to-day.

Sections (2) and (3) of Class II. need not detain us, nor the Proportional Representation system to which you refer with approval, but which nevertheless cannot eradicate the inherent evil of majority-rule. Let us concentrate on Class II. (1), representing the main idea advocated by you under the title of

"Selective Democracy": though personally I prefer to use the expression "Expert Bureaucracy."

Now, what has "the common man" to expect from Expert Bureaucracy, for whose sake he and his loved ones are being called upon to pass cheerfully through all this unspeakable welter of blood and agony? Surely there can be only one answer: He may expect the right of *voting* on the burning question of—which Experts are to govern him. And the choice of these Experts will of course be determined by the "damned compact majority." The majority is to decide who are to be the common man's physical and spiritual Inoculators; the Controllers of his food, drink, dress and other matters; and the Regulators of the reproduction of his species. No, Mr. Wells, that also *will not do*: that way lies the Servile State!

What remains, then? Anarchy! Reverting now to Class I. (1), I cannot accept your statement of the idea. To my mind, Anarchy involves the cessation of all external government—the abolition of all domination, State and economic, spiritual and physical: it means the individual self-government of free men and women, and a full and glorious life maintained and enriched by independent action or voluntary association for productive, artistic, scientific, recreative, and other purposes. As for the Experts, let them display all their skill, provided only that they do so without encroachment upon individual liberty; but it will be for us others, individually, to choose or refuse to avail ourselves of their wisdom, and the results, be they good or evil, shall be upon our own heads. We do not desire to be "saved from ourselves," but rather to work out our own salvation, retaining always the right of saving ourselves, if need be, from the ministrations of all Experts, benevolent or otherwise. Philosophy and Nature have taught us that our goal is Liberty—freedom from tyrants within and without!

Yours for Self-Sovereignty,
TOM SENHOUSE.

NOTES AND NEWS.

"Maurice," who contributed largely to the discussion on the Communist Colony scheme in these columns some months ago, has been arrested in Dublin. He is at present in Mountjoy Prison on remand, charged with having failed to register as an alien. The comrades are looking after him and taking him supplies pending his trial. We hope to hear favourable news of him soon.

The Swiss authorities, having discovered a "German plot" in their—more or less—free and enlightened, not to say neutral, country, are rounding up the Anarchists. Leon Bertoni, the editor of the Anarchist-Communist *Le Reveil*, and several other comrades, whose names we are unable to ascertain, have been arrested on suspicion of complicity. The Swiss authorities, however, have always endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with foreign Governments by handing over "deserters" to their respective countries; this has mainly been because Switzerland has always been a centre for the publication and dissemination of numerous anti-militarist journals and other literature in various languages. Anarchists, of course, invariably fall foul of the military and police, so we must expect short shrift for the comrades of the *Reveil*.

La Plèbe of Paris publishes a short account of the death of Amilcare Cipriani, the old Italian Anarchist. He had a revolutionary career, taking part in the Mazzini and Garibaldi insurrections in Italy, and the insurrections in Greece. He also took part in the Paris Commune, for which he was banished to New Caledonia, the penal settlement. Expelled from France, where he had returned after the amnesty, he went to Italy, only to be arrested for some affray in Egypt: altogether he spent some twenty-five years in prison.

The outlook for pacifists and "defeatists" in France becomes more cheerful as time goes on. A learned savant has pronounced his decision that "defaitisme" is symptomatic of mental disease, and even claims to have located the bacillus. He is in favour of all defeatists being interned in lunatic asylums for "treatment." M. Maurice Barrès advocates "assassination by surgery," and M. Paul Adam, another eminent littérateur, suggests the revival of the "Law of Suspects" (whereby people can be arrested and imprisoned on mere anonymous accusation), and the erection of the scaffold in the public square in order to intimidate the weaklings and waverers.

The French are esteemed and noted for their chivalry and gallantry to women. After the incarceration and enforced medical examination of Hélène Brion for pacifist propaganda, another feminist, Lucie Colliard, suspected of having propagated "Thou shalt not kill" doctrines, has been sentenced to two years and a fine of one thousand francs. *Noblesse oblige!*

L. A. M.

*Daily Chronicle, May 11, 1918.

THE ONE-DAY STRIKE IN IRELAND.

The following account contributed by B. Leahy, written during the recent happenings, will be interesting to our readers:—

We in Ireland will ever remember Tuesday, April 23rd. Never in history, I think, has there been such a complete general strike as is now for 24 hours taking place here in the Emerald Isle. Not a train nor a tram is running, not a shop is open, not a public house nor a tobacconist; even the public lavatories are closed. True to their resolution solemnly passed by 1,500 delegates at the Mansion House last Saturday, Trade Unionists of all Ireland have to-day ceased work in order to demonstrate their determination to resist to the death any attempt of the British Government to enforce Conscription in this country. The Clerk of the Weather seems also to be on our side, for to-day the weather has been perfect; the main thoroughfares have been alive all day with a constant stream of humanity all quiet and orderly, almost solemnly; and certainly in the best of good humour, taking a very welcome holiday. All the organised workers flocked to their respective halls to sign the anti-conscription pledge, and it is quite safe to say that scarce a single member but signed as a solemn duty and with far more earnestness than ever they recorded their vote for a Parliamentary candidate.

I do not think there has been a single untoward incident in Dublin. The troops have been confined to barracks all day, but they are allowing them out this evening. A few hotel staffs were found to be working, but upon the arrival of a couple of members of the Union followed by a large crowd, and demanding of the management that their staff should at once come out, they immediately appeared at the door putting on their hats and coats, and were welcomed by the crowd with clapping and cheers. During the morning, four of us made our way to Liberty Hall and the Trades Hall with our pockets filled with pamphlets; we sold all we had—17 shillings worth—in less than half-an-hour, and could easily have sold £17 worth. To-day no daily papers were published here, nor were the English or any sort of paper at all to be had; and owing to the proclaiming of all public meetings by the military, there was nothing for the whole populace to do but to stroll the streets and parks. Of course, every man, woman, and child wore one or more flags. This evening a large body of Sinn Féin Volunteers are parading the streets, and singing their songs in front of the Mansion House.

Never has there been such a day in the eventful history of Ireland, and if the British Government attempt to enforce Conscription here in the face of such determined resistance on the part of the whole people, our rulers must be a crowd of blithering lunatics.

TERMINOLOGICAL CONTORTIONS.

(To the Editor of FREEDOM.)

Dear Comrade,—In the May issue of FREEDOM one of your contributors launches an article with these simple words:

No telepathic hallucination, however scientifically enunciated, determined the disclosure of a dreadful spectre shadowing the principles of Communism, presumably apparent in the psychological outlook of modern Press Controllers.

Having taken a good breath, we find his next sentence is equally brief and clear:

The prerogative of economic conditions directs the vituperations against such a revolutionary ideal. . . .

His third surpasses both the above in plainness:

Contemporaneous with the ideal elucidated in the Communist Manifesto of the Petrograd Soviet. . . .

It makes one almost despair of Anarchism ever being understood of the people. Boy, the dictionary!—Yours fraternally,
L. A. MOTLER.

The possession of private property is very often extremely demoralising, and that is, of course, one of the reasons why Socialism wants to get rid of the institution. In fact, property is really a nuisance. Some years ago people went about the country saying that property has duties. They said it so often and so tediously that, at last, the Church has begun to say it. One hears it now from every pulpit. It is perfectly true. Property not only has duties, but has so many duties that its possession to any large extent is a bore. It involves endless claims upon one, endless attention to business, endless bother. If property had simply pleasures we could stand it; but its duties make it unbearable. In the interests of the rich we must get rid of it.—Oscar Wilde.

"SATIRE."

No, *Satire* is not dead. The one and only picture paper has a fatal fascination for the authorities, but if they have made any funeral arrangements we are afraid there will be a slight hitch about the corpse. We should certainly not gamble a lottery ticket on the chances of the coffin containing *Satire*.

Now, a sense of humour is all right in its place; but the kind of heavy-footed humour that emanates from the Home Office is past a joke. The May issue of *Satire* was barely in the press, indeed only a few copies had been pulled, when in the police walked in the best Prussian manner. The Crown Prince may be an expert in the burglary line, but when it comes to our own police, he is simply a back number.

The Home Office left the decision regarding the disposal of the booty to an "impartial" Advisory Committee, consisting chiefly of old men of the Bomb-Berlin-to-Blazes temperament. Of course, the result could be prognosticated blindfold. The illustrations were to be destroyed and the printer required to sign an undertaking not to print any further issues.

What next? The next thing will be—*Satire* in your hands as soon as we can. In the meantime write to the Home Office—and ourselves—saying what you think of the outrage; also collect any stray postal orders and send to the Manager, *Satire*, 127, Ossulston Street, London, N.W. 1. *Cheerio!*

THE "SATIRE" COMRADES.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (not otherwise acknowledged). (April 28—May 30.)

FREEDOM *Guarantee Fund*.—H. Smith, 5s.; R. Gundersen, 3s.; E. Dale, 1s.; E.M., 2s.; D. Hamilton, 2s.; H. Hume, 1s.; T. Burt, 1s.; J. Armstrong, 2s.; Jose, 1s.; H. W. Edwards, 1s.; N. Wright, 1s.; R. Peddie, 2s. 6d.; E. Watson, 10s.; Glasgow Group, £1; I. W. Shields, 5s.; J.S.R., 1s.; F. Goulding, 1s.; J. Cotton, 1s. 3d.; H. W. Journet, 4s.; G. D., £1; Knutsford, 13s. 6d.; Jim Walsh, 1s.; A. Wolfe, 5s.

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TO OUR READERS.

On and after June 24, says the Paper Controller, no returns of unsold papers will be allowed. It will therefore be necessary for our readers to give their newsagent an order for "Freedom" in advance, as he will not get more copies than are definitely ordered. But if there is any difficulty in getting the paper we would advise you to send us a postal order for 2s. 6d. and have it brought to your door every month by the postman. In either case you make sure of getting it regularly.

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Printed by the BLACKFRIARS PRESS, LTD., 5, PARSONAGE BUILDINGS, BLACKFRIARS STREET, MANCHESTER, and Published by FREEDOM PRESS, 127, OSSULSTON STREET, LONDON, N.W.