

Our British Letter

SOME recent happenings in Britain give one furiously to think. At the moment of writing, twelve members of the Communist Party of Great Britain are on trial for "sedition." They are being prosecuted under the provisions of an Act of 1797, passed by Pitt during the panic that followed the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars in the preceding year. Whether or not they are guilty is a matter for the Court to decide, and as to that we express no opinion. The significant thing about the action of the Government is that although the alleged offences were committed prior to the National Labor Party's Conference at Liverpool in the last week of September, no move was made until after that Conference had, by a majority of 2,100,000 on a card vote, decided to turn down the Communists and to enforce their expulsion from the party. There can be no doubt that this decision gave much encouragement to the reactionaries in the Cabinet who had for long been willing to wound but afraid to strike. They feared to find Labor arrayed against them, but when Labor, which had readily accepted the assistance in its local branches of the Communists, often its most active workers, had repaid that assistance by disowning them in terror lest some of the "respectables" in its Parliamentary party should lose their seats because of the association, the other reactionaries felt that action might safely be taken.

One possible result of this panicky procedure on the part of the Home Secretary will be to direct to the Communist party attention it would never otherwise have received. It is a dying party. From a boasted membership of over 5,000 in its annual report for 1922, it had dwindled down to less than 3,000 by June of this year, when the report presented to its annual conference "deplored the fact that our propaganda did not seem to be catching on with the British working classes." The reason for this failure is not far to seek. One has but to listen to their wild talk to realize how hopeless is the task they have set themselves. It can only be explained by an utter failure to understand the psychology of the said British working classes. If our Tories had the least glimmering of sense they would leave the Communists to talk themselves to death. They were fast doing so, as any impartial observer of their proceedings in the London parks could not fail to discover. If there are any brains in the party these are most effectually concealed from view. Vulgarly, a certain glibness of tongue combined with a reckless ignorance of, or disregard for facts, comprise the stock-in-trade of their speakers; and it is quite common to see persons turning away after a few moments of the kind of talk heard from the platform, making no attempt whatever to conceal their disgust.

That they, or some of them, are motivated by a deep sense of the injustice of present-day conditions is true, but instead of directing their attack upon the cause of that

injustice they scream wildly about a revolution by force, and the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Instinctively the average Britisher is opposed to the idea of a dictatorship, especially if it be foreign. Having long since thrown off the political domination of Rome, he is not now going to submit to dictation from a small hand-full of political adventurers at Moscow. That he may, and does in fact, submit to dictation at the will of a few Land Lords is another matter. He is only dimly conscious of it at the moment, but is fast waking up to this. For this awakening he is in no way indebted to the Communists; on the contrary, their activities all go to draw attention away from this the fundamental dictatorship, and to confuse the minds of the public by want of directness. It is of little use advancing a policy that is entirely destructive. To pull down may be necessary; but the question "What are you going to put in place of the present system?" is not satisfactorily answered by repeating the parrot-phrase, "Dictatorship of the proletariat."

Instead of suppressing Communists, the Government had better direct attention to the evil social conditions which make for the Communist agitator his most fertile soil. It is significant that it is only in the most filthy and depressing of our slums that the "reds" appear to get any hold, and this is not remarkable, for one can well believe that denizens of such plague-spots may argue that no change could be for the worse. In the recent municipal elections in London, it was only in those two Boroughs having particularly bad slums that Labor was able to win a few seats. Here, it is fair to say, the poorest voters have been corrupted by the unemployment "dole" and by poor relief, backed by reckless promises of more "public assistance" should Labor be returned. The tragedy of it all is that Labor held out hopes impossible of realization. It was going to abolish slums, and at the same time reduce the local rates. But there is nothing in its programme to warrant such promises, for it does not go to root causes, nor even in their direction. It is committed to a policy of buying up slum areas and compensating Land Lords, and in view of this it would be just as honest to promise its dupes the moon, for there would be the same chance of delivering the goods.

One thing can be said with certainty, however. The Communist, have been an invaluable asset to the Tory Party. By repeatedly playing upon the fears of the nervous old ladies of both sexes who frequent the clubs of the West, with tales of the coming of the "Red Terror," these dear old souls have been induced to loosen their purse-strings in support of the political machine, and of that other "non-party" organization run by ante-diluvian Brigadier-Generals, and Dames of the Primrose League, the British Fascisti.

This organization of well-meaning but completely duped young persons is founded, so its literature solemnly declares, "to preserve liberty." One is not obliged to be-

lieve this, however, and it would be hard to do so in view of the manner in which these serio-comic Mussolinis comport themselves. Not all wear the "Black Shirt," but many do, and seek to get themselves up to look as Italian as possible. They drill, and go through strange antics. It is, of course, pathetic to regard these persons as they are engaged in preparing to defend the British Empire; they are so serious that one might suppose that the Empire belonged to them. Behind the Fascist and the Communists is the same mistaken idea of Force. Both think to right the world by control, compulsion, dictatorship; and here they are in full agreement with the very people responsible for the present prosecution.

A recent happening would appear to lend color to the view that there exists in Britain one law for the poor and another for the rich. It is unfortunate that this should be so, but Fear is installed in high places, and when that is so Reason is usually dethroned. Certain B. F.'s in the effort to defend the Empire, held up a newspaper delivery van in the early hours of the morning, presented a revolver at the driver and compelled him to dismount and leave his post. The B. F.'s. took possession and drove rapidly away with the 8,000 copies of the *Daily Herald* that were in the van. If they thought to prevent the coming of revolution by holding up "Labor's Only Daily," then they were indeed "B. F.'s," for the *Herald* is much too respectable ever to provoke any reader to action. However, a side-slip led to the van being smashed against the railings of a church, and the papers being strewn along the Strand. Later the four persons responsible were secured and charged with stealing the van and its contents. They pleaded "patriotic motives" and, after the case had gone on a while the Public Prosecutor astonished the magistrate by his "unusual leniency" in withdrawing the charge of theft, and reducing the offense to a common misdemeanour. This resulted in the culprits being "bound over," a mere farce; and now the question is being asked in public, and will be repeated when the House of Commons meets, "What would have happened had the van belonged to the *Morning Post*?"

In the House of Commons, a certain Tory member is most anxious to get a Bill through to deal with the "political levy." Trade unionists, so this gentleman argues, are tyrannised over and compelled to pay to funds of which many do not approve. The *Daily Herald* is wroth over this, and excitedly warns all and sundry to keep hands off the workers' funds. It is not altogether disinterested however, for the contribution from the political funds of the Trade Unions devoted to the support of the *Herald* was raised a year or so back from 1d per member to 3d.

These, and many other indications all point to the struggle of the future centering around the question of "Authority" or "Liberty." In this fight the C. L. P. will have to say with Voltaire, "I disagree with what you say, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it."

Freedom of thought and of expression of opinion is vital. There can be no compromise on this. Much as we detest the opinions of many to whom we are opposed, we shall be prepared to stand with these in defence of their right to hold them. In taking this stand we shall not be departing from our own cause but rather emphasizing it. For all Freedom is bound up with the holding of the land.

Turning to the question with which as, C. L. party men, we are primarily concerned, there are two happenings that call for notice. Mr. Lloyd George has now set forth on his second Land Campaign. Suffice it to say that his proposals are not so drastic as those of his earlier Report of pre-war days. There is nothing whatever for Land Lords to find fault with in his latest. He positively asserts, and quotes pages of legal opinion in support of his view, that they cannot, and do not "own" their lands, and then coolly proposes to secure to them at least 65 per cent. of their present rentals. This is to be an annuity, and in the face of this the secretary of his Committee calmly writes to the press to deny that Mr. George's proposals are "an endowment of Land Lords." That secretary would seem to be able to say anything! At a recent meeting at Manchester, Mr. George gave some indication of the proposals that will be contained in his Urban Report, about to be issued. Here again we were told that the land did not belong to the Land Lords, but their legal rights are to be secured.

Just as the Liberals who follow Lloyd George are being committed to buy back our land, so are those who thought to find greater courage in the leaders of Labor waking up to see that these too, and by a large majority, are committing them to the same unjust policy. The "Land" resolution of the Executive, proposed by Colonel J. C. Wedgwood, M. P., of all persons, commits the Labor Party officially to the Taxation of Land values to provide a fund with which to buy from the Land Lords their land. This is the inevitable outcome of the mistaken policy of compromise. Nothing is ever gained by it. The advocacy of the step-by-step methods has supplied the reactionary leaders of Labor with the one weapon by which to prevent anything drastic being done in regard to land. At the same time, by giving lip service to the principle, they have silenced those who were calling for the taxation of land values. To all such, Labor now points to its programme saying, "Why, it is part of our policy."

The Land Taxers may protest, but of what use will that be? They have been calling for this particular taxation now for forty years; today the Liberals promise it, and Labor says it has long been in favor of the principle, but neither has any intention of implementing the promise. One course alone is clear for all followers of Henry George. They must cease talking of taxation. This is not a fiscal issue at all but an issue involving the right to Life. Let us unite to present it in that light and have done with time-serving and timorous politicians. Their business is

to catch votes, and in that business principles are often an embarrassment. For the C. L. P. in Britain and elsewhere the future is full of hope. The increasing discussion is all our way. The more the people talk about land the sooner will it dawn upon a sufficient number of them that we who demand its immediate restoration without compensation are demanding simple justice. In this fight they who think to defeat us often render very real assistance by provoking thought.—J. W. GRAHAM PEACE.

A Man Sent From God

SUNDAY, OCTOBER THIRTY-FIRST, 1897

THE train stopped in Albany. The old car knocker stood in his accustomed place and said, "Henry George is dead." I only stared for it could not be. "Yes," he repeated slowly, "Henry George died last night." The black headlines in the morning papers told of the passing of the greatest American of our generation, and interest in the bitterest campaign the metropolis ever saw gave way to a contemplation and discussion of the ways of immutable Providence.

I hurried over to Rensselaer to see John Rourk. He seemed dazed but agreed to meet me in New York Sunday morning. I went to the office to get a pass, but John waived all formalities and went down on one of the night freights.

Sunday morning we met and joined the long line of people waiting for a last sight of our leader. We passed the casket slowly. A tired looking great little man, more gray than I had known him, but wearing the serenity that comes only to those who follow the paths of Duty.

Soon after noon a knot of people gathered at the entrance to the Grand Central Palace and we joined them. The streets were soon blocked by crowds that had no chance of admission. The doors were opened for a few moments only, but in those few moments the building was filled.

Jew and gentile; priest, rabbi and presbyter; laborer, artizan, shopkeeper, and capitalist; for of such are the common people.

"There was a man sent from God and his name was Henry George," said Father McGlynn, and the assemblage was no longer a decorous service for the dead but a throng of people acclaiming exultingly the completion of a holy life.

It was not for achievement in arms, or accumulation, or industry, nor even in letters, although he had written the greatest prose poem, but because of a simple and earnest life that gave all to his fellow men.

It was nightfall, and after the service the last journey that we take upon earth. Gradually the vast crowds became a procession of marching people—

"Without sound of music
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain crown
The great procession swept."

Tammany's banners were furled, for the Tiger recognized the passing of the incorruptible, but the Republican banners floated in the nightwind typical of those who say, "I AM," but who too often are not.

In that procession there were few who knew their neighbor. There was only the tread of marching feet, and the thoughts of those who marched. Down Broadway and up the approach to the Brooklyn Bridge. At the entrance, police on either side, droned monotonously, "Break step! break step!" Over the storied river and then we entered the crowds again and saw before us a pyramid of people, the Brooklyn City Hall. The procession vanished and in its place was the people.

Henry George had returned to God.

—P. A. PARKER in *The Forum*.

Third International Conference to Promote the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade

WILL Single Taxers who are looking forward to attending the conference to be held in August 1926 in Copenhagen, Denmark, kindly communicate with me relative to forming a committee which shall represent the American delegation.

A Central Committee, resident in New York, can more easily attend to the practical business matters concerning our part in the conference, questions of transportation and the like, and deal with the foreign committees.

Let us send a fine large delegation that will show the energetic Danish Single Taxers how Henry George's own countrymen appreciate the splendid work they are doing.

To those who know the field, Denmark offers best possibilities for the eventual institution of land value taxation as the law of the country.

—GRACE ISABEL COLBRON,

Care LAND AND FREEDOM, Temporary Chairman.
150 Nassau Street, New York City.

The Benefits of Inventions

HITHERTO it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil if any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make fortunes. They have increased the comforts of the middle classes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny, which it is in their nature and in their futurity to accomplish.

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