

## Motler's Wisdom.

# Workers' Dreadnought

CO-OPERATION, NOT COMPETITION.

VOL. X. No. 15.

SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 1923.

WEEKLY.

## ITALIAN CO-OPERATIVES

Of late many writings of Odon Por on the productive Co-operatives of Italy have been published in English.

Odon Por is not a Communist: he dismisses cursorily what he describes as Utopianism. He favours a complex organisation representing the productive Co-operative Societies, private producers, organised consumers, the State, and other public bodies. In our opinion, the workers' initiative would be smothered by outside super-imposed authority in such an organisation as Odon Por desires. His proposals no doubt largely spring from his desire to avoid any clash of interests which may cause social upheavals. He says \*:

"The time will come when the two forms of enterprise, co-operative and private, will begin to exhaust the possibilities of their respective regions of expansion, and will have filled every cranny of the economic sphere in which they act. When this happens, and when invasion of their respective camps is necessary, the next step; an understanding between them, will become inevitable. This understanding will probably take the form of a super-structure on the lines of the mediaeval guilds."

Odon Por's proposals for the guilds he desires are not, however, on the lines of the mediaeval guilds, but on a much more bureaucratic model. He quotes with approval the demand of the sub-Alpine Press Association for the control of the Piedmont telephone system if the State cease to own it, as announced by Mr. Mussolini. The sub-Alpine Press Association demanded a supreme council of management for the telephone, of representatives of the sub-Alpine Press Association, the Turin Chamber of Commerce, the telephone subscribers, and the staff of the telephone service.

That such a proposal was made by a Press Association shows that the idea of the all-sufficing righteousness of private enterprise has been more largely undermined in Italy than in this country. Nevertheless, the alternative suggested is not to our taste. Chambers of Commerce have no place in our visions of the Socialist community, nor do we know why the ordinary citizen who uses the telephone, but knows little or nothing of its mechanism, should desire to instruct his brothers and sisters who operate the telephone to their business. Such theories of control by the consumers are part of the ideology which has grown up in the system of production for profit.

### Railway Co-operative Society.

Odon Por is more interesting in describing the actual developments of the Italian Co-operatives, of which he has undoubtedly a wide knowledge, though his account of them is coloured by his half-way-house point of view.

He recounts \* that some twenty years ago the Italian railwaymen proposed to take over the management of the Italian State railways. The Trade Union of the secondary railways has recently formed a National Co-

operative Combine, including 12 Co-operative Societies, covering 12 different areas. The object is to take over the various railway systems from the State on lease, as the existing contracts with the various private companies come to an end. The Combine includes all grades of workers, from the stationmaster and engine driver to the navy. Shares of 20 lire are issued. Each member must take up at least four shares.

### Marine Co-operatives.

The National Federation of Marine Workers was founded in 1909, to include all workers on board ship, from captain to cabin boy. In 1918 the Federation promoted the founding of a Co-operative Society, the Garibaldi, by its affiliated societies. Membership of the "Garibaldi" is confined to members of the Marine Workers' Federation. Shares in the Garibaldi are 25 lire each. No union may hold more than 5,000 lire, this being the maximum fixed by law. In April 1919 the federated unions decided that their members should invest the increases in pay just received in co-operative shares up to the total allowed to each Union. The subscriptions were fixed at 60 lire per month for captains and chief engineers, 50 for other officers, and 45 for other ratings. The Garibaldi has now 65,000 shareholding members and a share capital of 54,000,000 lire. It owns seven large steamers, one oil tanker, and smaller craft. Five ships were bought from the State. The December 1922 balance showed a net profit of 1,319,822.75 lire; 10 per cent. was paid to reserve, 45 per cent. to sinking fund, 20 per cent. to welfare fund, 25 per cent. to development fund.

Disabled members and the relatives of deceased members are re-paid the value of their holdings. Shareholders, according to the rules, are to be re-paid as soon as possible.

### Metal Workers' Co-operatives.

There are about a hundred metal workers' Co-operatives. A combine of Co-operatives was formed in 1919, and about twenty societies joined it. It is able to construct large merchant and war ships. At Trieste, Venice, Ancona, Spezia, Genoa, and Sazana it has yards for repairing the largest liners. It has workshops for the construction and repair of railway coaches, electric and long-distance transmission plant, the construction of machine tools and tool-making machines, sporting guns, machinery of precision, plumbers' fittings, agricultural machinery; it has iron and brass foundries. It has built ships for the Government, and coaches and electric plant for the State railways.

When the combine began, some Co-operatives joined it as autonomous members, others were bought up and managed by it. The dual system caused difficulties. The result is that the combine has given up direct management. It leases out to separate combines all the Co-operatives it formerly bought.

The combine now undertakes the following functions: \*\*

"(a) Taking on contracts for work and sub-letting them to Co-operative Societies.

"(b) Provision of funds for the work so allocated.

"(c) Supply of raw materials.

"(d) Commercial office, advertising, etc., for information, allocation, and exchange of individual products.

"(e) Political office for propaganda and policy.

"(f) Administration and technical inspection of office."

The rules for the Co-operatives in the combine are:

"(a) They may not independently take on work of considerable extent without obtaining the previous consent of the technical office, in order to avoid failure or disaster.

"(b) They may not make large direct purchases of raw material unless they can show that they can buy at lower prices than those offered by the supply office of the combine.

"(c) They must submit to such periodical inspection of their administration as the combine shall think fit, in order to safeguard the efficient working of the Co-operative Societies."

It is interesting to notice that even in this authoritarian age it has been found most practical for the individual Co-operatives to retain their autonomy. In the Socialist community of the future the central offices represented by this combine will be centres for compiling statistics, collating information and for research—not for authoritarian control.

### The Venice Arsenal.

The Venice Arsenal is under the control of the Venice Municipality, which delegates the management to a combine composed of the metal workers' Co-operatives and the Capitalist shipping companies. The interest which the shipping companies may draw from the money they have invested in the Arsenal is limited by law.

Such arrangements show the strength to which the Trade Union and Co-operative Movement had attained before the rise of the Fascisti. Also the limitations in the policy and power of the Italian Labour Movement; for all these are but modifications of Capitalism—the wage system remains untouched.

### Building Co-operatives.

The Italian Federation of Building Co-operatives and Communes was founded in 1920 by the Building Workers' Federation, in agreement with the National Co-operative and Trade Union Federations. In some districts private enterprise in building has ceased, and the Co-operatives have taken its place. The Building Federation undertakes not merely buildings, but repair and construction of roads, reclamation of waste land, irrigation and drainage, the making of embankments, dykes and waterworks. It undertakes contracts for work abroad and has carried out work in the devastated regions of France.

It should be observed that the building workers' Trade Union and the building Co-operatives are merely a loose organisation.

\* The Guild Movement in Italy "International Labour Review."

\*\* Odon Por in "International Labour Review."

Can we doubt that the people are developing towards the Communist sovietisation of industry, even though it be by devious and often mistaken paths?

The Ravenna Co-operatives.

The Ravenna Co-operative is of another order. It applies not merely to one industry, but to many. The Ravenna Co-operative Society was formed so long ago as 1883. In 1885 it took over the management of a large stretch of land belonging to the municipality of Ravenna. This land it has reclaimed and cultivated. The same Co-operative Society has since reclaimed and settled waste land belonging to the Crown at Ostia, near Rome.

The success of the Agricultural Co-operative Society at Ravenna led to the formation of numbers of other societies in the neighbourhood: plasterers', carters', joiners', smiths', metal workers', house painters', tinmiths', glaziers', porters', marine workers', marble workers', bakers', and other Co-operatives were formed, and have since formed the Federation of Co-operative Societies of the Province of Ravenna. There are in all 100 Co-operatives, with 23,000 members, owning the plant required for their industries, and farming upwards of 17,000 acres of land. The Federation owns and farms a further 4,500 acres of land.

The local societies are autonomous. The Federation represents them in dealing with outsiders, and assists in procuring materials and giving technical advice.

All this has come about because the marshes of Ravenna were abandoned by private Capitalism. The Co-operatives have been built on the most advanced and idealistic basis realised by the people who originated and carried out this work. Had the possibility of Communist co-operation found a practical and determined basis in the minds of the founders, the organisation would have been different. We should strive to ensure that all future new settlements be conducted on Communist lines, so far, at least, as the internal management is concerned.

The Ravenna Co-operatives have built factories for private firms, public buildings, roads, canals, bridges, not merely in their own province, but all over Italy.

Shortcomings of the Co-operatives.

If funds are short the workers work on credit or lend their own small savings. The profits are divided between the reserve, sinking fund, education and welfare work, the proportion being fixed by the general meeting of members.

The great commercial success of the Italian Co-operatives has been reached through the efforts of their great membership. Odon Por declares that the Co-operatives are a real menace to Capitalist firms, which, in some directions, find that they cannot compete with the Co-operatives.

This doubtless is the reason why, as Por reports:

"The present Government has announced that it is preparing a Bill for setting up a National Council of Labour and Production."

The great industrial Capitalists hired Mussolini to organise the Black Shirt Army to crush the Socialist and Trade Union Movement by violence. They may use subtler methods to limit the competition of the Workers' Co-operatives.

It must be recognised, however, that whilst the workers have displayed remarkable initiative and solidarity in constructing them, the Co-operatives have in no sense liberated the workers.

Products for Use Not Attempted.

They are not linked together in the effort to make themselves independent of Capitalism while they are trading with each other. They are also trading with private enterprise on the same or similar terms. Those of them that are not paying interest on the invested capital are paying into large sinking funds

to redeem their loans. They are competing with Capitalism to produce and sell at a profit. Production for use has not been attempted.

Unemployment.

As to the Marine Co-operative, which, Odon Por describes, its assistant secretary in its centre at Genoa resigned for precisely these reasons. He pointed out that at the close of the war the employees of the Co-operative suffered like other workers from unemployment and falling prices because the Co-operatives had not attempted to make themselves independent of Capitalism.

Odon Por urges a closer binding of the Co-operatives to the Capitalist structure, a definite union between them, and private enterprise.

Actually the hope of the future lies in the opposite direction.

LETTERS OF KARL LIEBKNECHT.

Translated from the German by G. B.

TO HIS WIFE.

September 20th, 1910.

Dearest,—

We shall soon be celebrating the third anniversary of our marriage. I cannot imagine where you will be on that day. I have received no sign of life from any of you since September 3rd, and despair of receiving any. It is doubtful if this letter will reach Berlin by October 1st. The conditions of the post are abnormal, like all the rest. We are working immediately behind the first line at the front, near the advance posts, without any protection. The Russian front is still on this side of the Duna. Night and day shots and explosions, bright flashes and dull rumblings, hissings and whistlings and sobbings and heavy crashes. Bombs and shrapnel follow each other unceasingly; at night we must be ready to leave our quarters at any moment. Eventually we shall have to go in the trenches; according to Hindenburg the sappers have behaved so well that they are to have this "honour." Really we are not fit for it, nor experienced enough. Even the solitary non-com. who has charge of us has never tried it, and knows nothing at all about it. Till now, however, we have had no losses in our division, although we were once obliged to evacuate on account of the artillery fire, and our actual quarters have come under fire more than once. In other divisions of the same company there have been several losses. Only the day before yesterday a non-com., father of six children, was killed by shrapnel. Yesterday a man shot himself with his rifle, firing it off with his foot.

The way we are treated here is shameful—criminal. Please let Haase know of it. The entire battalion of 2,500 men has only one doctor—and what a doctor! One doctor for 2,500 men who are scattered about in extremely small companies over an area of about 80 square miles or more. In my own company of about 500 men there are two officers of the Ambulance Corps—for 500 men scattered about in an area of 80 square miles. And of these two, one has been transferred to the forage transport, and so lost altogether to the ambulance service—just now when the danger is greatest. And that at the front; it is a great scandal. The victualling here, too, leaves much to be desired, but we find plenty of good potatoes in the fields. We can get no tobacco at all, and that is particularly trying, as tobacco is the only stimulant left to us. Behind, at the reserve posts there is everything—two cigars and a couple of cigarettes a day, for instance. Here we get one cigar every jubilee year, and we pay 20 pfennigs for a miserable cigarette. The hardest privation of all, however, is having no light. After six o'clock it is quite dark—no candles or anything. We wander about a little while. We can neither read nor write, and have nothing to do but "go to bed"—that is, lie down on our bit of straw all

Your KARL

dressed as we are, rolled up as best we can in our cloaks and thin blankets in a cold barn or stable, to freeze all night, and very often wet to the skin. We really need our winter clothes here; and I left mine at home when I came away in June. Please send them to me at once, and send me every week regularly five packets of good tobacco and twenty cigars, each at 6 pfennigs, big and strong, and every week, too, five candles, not too large. Please send me the "Tageblatt," I hear it is temporarily stopped. Once I got "Vorwaerts."

I have quite got away from the original topic of this letter. I began about the anniversary of our wedding day, and was intending to write you a few comforting words. I want to tell you that I love you, that the time we passed together is to me very sacred, and that if I come out of this massacre safe and well in spite of everything, I want to help you to make your future more what you desired it to be than I have been able to do so far. Spend that day thinking of me, my darling; think of Prague, Eger, and Schandau, of the Schlachtensee, of Hamburg, Heidelberg, of Wurms, and so on, as I shall do. . . .

Your KARL.

TO HIS WIFE.

My Dearest,—

I am leaving for Kertschen to find the doctor. Something flew in my eye at work and inflammation has set in. It is nothing serious, and will give me a chance to get away from the front for a couple of days. It is three o'clock in the morning, and I and a couple of our men have taken refuge for the night in a deserted house. Cossack patrols are prowling round, so one of us must sit up and I have undertaken it as I wanted a chance to work and read. I got a heap of newspapers a little while ago, but so far no letters. We are two or three miles from the front, and for the moment things are fairly quiet. The heavy artillery is not in operation. Last night there were several sanguinary skirmishes in the forest of the Duna. The German losses were considerable, particularly owing to the fact that the German artillery fire fell short. It seems that operations on a large scale are being prepared on both sides. German and Russian. The spirit of the German troops is much excited—nay, embittered. I found a large number of old reservists, my acquaintance, who are in a very disagreeable state of mind. They are all utterly sick of the massacre.

In the early part of the time all sorts of officers, including two princes, used to come and discuss with me. My part in the discussion was carried on with perfect outspokenness, and was, to me, very diverting. I told them the truth quite plainly, and made them admit, in the end, that it was German and Austria who had provoked the war, and that they had hailed the assassination in Sarajevo as an excuse sent from heaven; they expressed with the utmost cynicism the hopes of further conquests. One of them even confessed to me that he had worked two years to help bring on the war, and that the war would last another year, and perhaps two. If we have an opportunity I will give you more particulars of these conversations.

It is all dark round me. I hear the singing in the distance. I don't know why I am afraid, horribly afraid, of losing you. All the past lives before me, and I shall myself in it if you do not lift me out. I love you so; love me always. My hands stretched out to you; give me yours. Help me. Without you I am nothing. Everything seems to give way in me.

Your KARL

Navayuga, an independent weekly devoted to national and international problems, edited by G. V. Krishna Rao, Gandhipet, Gummadragada, Madras, India, 12/- a year.

SHOWING A TONGUE.

By L. A. Motler.

When I was trying to disguise myself as a German in a German Durchreisezug (or through train) I recollected that story of the Scotsman and the man from Zumberzet. You will remember they were trying to ask each other the time, or maybe the Scotsman was asking for a match. I don't know. But anyway, after they had each been cursing the other for not knowing the English language, the Scot desperately threw out a few phrases in fluent Zulu. Immediately the Zumberzet man understood him. And a sort of entente cordiale (Johnny Dewar brand) arose out of that discoidal misunderstanding.

You see, Henry, I had been struggling with a dictionary that purported to give the exact meaning in German of whatever I wanted (but most of what I didn't want). It was a real German book, printed in Germany, so it ought to have been all Sir Garnet and Al at Norddeutscher Lloyd's.

Unfortunately, I read the English part of the dialogue first, and it gave me decided misgivings. I turned to "In einem Postwagen . . ."

"If you would be kind enough to change places with me, you would oblige me very much. I am always ill when I ride with my back to the horses."

Now Germany is in a bad way, but I have never seen a broken-down train being hauled along by horses, although I have been in a motor-car that was being hauled by ten donkeys and fifty kaffirs out of a raging torrent that fifteen minutes ago had been a mild-mannered, half-dried Cape Province spruit. But that by the way. To return to our horses. I noticed after all that "Postwagen" meant stage-coach, so it was a little behind the times. Making allowance for half a century, however, and making "horses" read "engine," I thought I would get along. So I read some more.

"You appear to be inclined to sleep, madam."

I had noticed it myself, but it had never occurred to me that it was something to talk about, like the weather, for instance, or the price of Munich lager. Yes, Matilda, just one more, thanks.

"Yes, but one cannot get into a convenient position."

"Do not inconvenience yourself, madam. If my shoulder is any accommodation to you . . ."

I thought this was fine. There was a fraulein in the train who could have had both my shoulders and a bit of my lap if I had known the German for it before. But now she was fast asleep; and, strange to say, not one of the Germans there had offered her anything but a cold shoulder, as far as I had noticed. Maybe the guide book meant that shoulders were not for home consumption.

However, here we are on the railway. Strange I did not notice it before, but you will easily understand "Gesprach zwischen zwei Reisenden auf einer Eisenbahn." I myself did not get any information like this dialogue gave me to understand was supplied lavishly, but here it is.

"Are you going as far as Dresden by this train?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of travelling with you."

Personally nobody asked me where I was going, except the kondukteur, and he would not believe me until I had searched my seven-teen pockets for the ticket that was in my hand all the time. He even laughed. And nobody asked me: "How many stations are there between this and Dresden?" I could easily have answered them, for the guide book said: "Eight, but the train only stops at six of them."

However, I was going to Berlin; and there were about forty stations, and the train only

stopped at thirty-nine of them—as I found out afterwards. Exactly what this information is I don't know. But if the fraulein had accepted the accommodation of my shoulder, the next question would have had me sitting up:

"Do we pass through any tunnels?"

"Only one, and that a short one."

Sure, Henry, my lad, a tunnel is a tunnel. But my tuck was out. The fraulein woke up and turned up the gas miles before we came to a tunnel. She never even looked at me but once, and then I found it was because I was trying to read the "Lokalanzeiger" upside down. Germans believe all Englishmen are mad; and I am afraid she went home with that impression.

Believe me, it is not easy to carry on a conversation when you are travelling. Supposing you want to say to a fraulein you like her, she has a kind face, and if an orange is any accommodation to her, well, what are you to do with a book that says:

"If they do not put another engine on, we shall be a long time on the road; for the train is a very long one, and consists chiefly of waggons loaded with rails to repair the railroad between Oschatz and the viaduct at Riesa."

She would probably have said the German for "Oh, quit your kidding, old bean, and don't be so fresh." Or, maybe, have pulled down the handle of the notbremse and have me installed in the nearest fortress for lunatic behaviour. As it was, I looked up that blessed guide book some more.

"When do we give up our tickets?"

Now this is the time when the guide book could have given some all-weather fool-proof information; but instead:

"They seldom ask for them here. Mind you do not lose your ticket for your luggage."

Pish! If they had asked for my ticket once, they had asked for it forty times. You see, I had been advised by a friend (you know those friends who know everything, Henry), and he had said that if there was one thing a Continental thief was good at, that was pocket-picking; and of all things in the world, he preferred to pinch a rail ticket. So I kept my ticket buried deep in a different place each time; I could never remember where I had last put it. And as for luggage tickets, I hadn't any luggage to speak of.

Every mile was landing me nearer my destination; but of information suitable to impart to a young girl with blonde hair and blue eyes, well, you could search that guide book from cover to cover. You could likewise search me.

What was the use of saying to her:

"The situation of the engine driver and stoker must be very unpleasant with such a neat in front of them."

shaven. And you can do a bit of propaganda with it, trying to tell the young lady travelling with you the Esperanto for tunnel.

"I think I will drink the health of the inventor of Esperanto, and to your success, Henry. Matilda, la saman komplzet!

We regret that L. A. Motler's signature was omitted from his "Press Gangdom" in last week's issue. Our readers, however, will have recognised his style.

THE DESECRATION OF THE EMBANKMENT.

How ugly are the manners of Capitalism! The banks of the old grey Thames, which should be a place of rest and peace for Londoners, are desecrated by huge painted letters and glaring electric signs advertising the "Daily Mail," "Boots," "Millennium Flour," and so on. Firms which advertise in that fashion should be boycotted for inflicting eyesores upon the people.

Quiet is banished from the Embankment, with its trees and its potential grandeur, by the ceaseless roar and clatter and the flashing lights of the electric trams. Londoners thronging in enormous numbers to work in the city from the proletarian suburbs on the south side of the river must be conveyed to and from their homes; and the Embankment tramlines are useful connecting-links between the various southern tram routes. That is so; but if the enrichment and beautifying of ordinary life were not almost entirely thrust aside by financial considerations, the Embankment trams would probably pass under the roadway, and some less hideous and noisy mechanism would certainly be devised for transporting the people.

More poignantly disturbing even than the noisy trams are the sad waifs who spend their days, and, when the police permit it, their nights also, upon the Embankment. Gaunt, ill-clad figures, with yearning eyes, they seem to ponder the possibility of ending their existence in those grey waters.

AFTER FIFTY YEARS.

The Salvation Army celebrated its fiftieth anniversary by a procession through the streets of London on Saturday, June 23rd. In fifty years that "Army" has advanced not one step. It still preaches the old barbarities of bygone Hebrew superstition. It still calls on the people—and especially the poor and lowly—to live in dread of hell fire. "Blood and fire" is still the motto inscribed on its banners. "The Army" has even gone backward since the day of its foundation, for it has now organised Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in imitation military uniforms.

Past fields and vineyards where the grape and grain Bear witness to their unremitting toil Trudge the degenerate soldiers of the soil And saviours of the world. O'er hill and plain, Bending beneath their burdens, see them wend Disconsolate and flouted and despised, Always unrecompensed, unrecognised, And still their burden gathers, still they bend.

—Godfrey Blount, B.A.

THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION IN RUSSIA. By Alexandra Kollontay.

First Soviet Commissary for Social Welfare. Describing the conflict between the Communist workers and the Soviet Government for the Workers control of industry. An important book. Price 6d.

Workers' Dreadnought

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Our View.

THE FIRST POLICE RAIDS in its history have befallen the Daily Mystery Herald. The cause of these Sumarine raids is its publication of an alleged photograph of an Admiral submarine.

The Observer, and other Capitalist newspapers, published details concerning this ship in advance of the Daily Herald.

Capitalist newspapers have stated that the submarine was laid down ten days before the Washington Conference, in order to evade the agreements there arrived at; also that the submarine, the largest in the world, has a cruising radius of 6,000 miles, a displacement of 2,780 tons on the surface, and 3,500 tons submerged.

The Observer stated on June 17th: "According to reports, which the Admiralty will neither deny nor confirm, she will mount 12-in. guns, and will in reality be a submersible battleship."

Certainly we think that the Government might have made a show of impartiality by raiding the Capitalist newspapers also; but it was a splendid advertisement for the Daily Herald.

Whilst Britain is alleged to have launched the largest submarine, the United States is said to have built the largest war aeroplane with a wing spread of 120 feet, capable of dropping a bomb which would make a 50-ft. crater and destroy every building within a radius of half a mile.

THAT THE DARIAC REPORT on the Rhineland was accepted and acted upon by the French Government is shown by another secret document published by the Observer.

This report by the French representative in the Rhineland is dated April 26th, 1923. It shows that the French financed the activities of Dr. Dorten, the German separatist leader. Dorten publicly advocated the Rhineland becoming an autonomous federal State within the Reich, but assured the French that this programme was merely designed to calm the uneasiness of his followers who feared a disguised French annexation.

The relations between the French and Dr. Dorten continued for some years. In February 1923 they became strained, and the French accused Dorten of doing nothing to develop the separatist movement, of exaggerating its importance, of misusing the funds entrusted to him, and of provoking campaigns in the French Press hostile to the French High Commissariat which was financing him.

The writer of the report declares Dr. Dorten incapable of malpractices, adding that he believes him upright and honest in

money matters. Nevertheless, he has to confess he has no proof to support his opinion of Dr. Dorten, "for the budgets Dorten produced were too sketchy for us to draw any conclusions."

The document advises negotiations with Dorten, not as with another Power, but as with a valued and weighty counsellor.

This document clearly demonstrates the ugly recklessness and lack of scruple with which Governments manipulate opinion, and use public money and power, to serve the interests of ambitious men who happen to have secured office.

AN ENGINEER WRITES from Nuneaton: "I am learning to operate a The Reign of Hosiery machine. For a month I shall receive no pay, but the chances of work are greater than in the engineering trade."

One man looking after ten automatic machines can produce forty pairs of stockings per hour, finishing operations taking only a few seconds for each pair.

One woman in a 48-hour week, with the help of a girl of 14 to 16 years, can produce 100 dozen pairs of socks, finished by hand.

Dyeing is done by the 10,000. Nevertheless, millions of hours are wasted in darning, patching and faking up stockings and socks. Thus time and energy is misused, and feet are kept in a state of discomfort, though the machines can produce stockings and socks as fast as they can be cut off with a pair of scissors.—H. R. G.

Millions of hours, too, are wasted in selling the stockings and socks, which often pass from the manufacturer through many middlemen before they reach the retail shopkeeper, and eventually the purchaser and wearer.

This is the age of potential plenty, but the vast production which is possible is checked by the manipulations of the private-property system. The world's population might easily be supplied with more hosiery than it would care to use, if only production were for use, not profit.

THE APPROPRIATE COMMENTARY to this Nuneaton letter comes from A. B. Dumbair, in Johannesburg: "The Capitalist system of production is marvellous. The manufacturers keep improving the machines and dismissing the workers, and expecting to sell their increased production to a decreasing number of people with the power to buy. The unemployed, without the means to buy, cannot help to make a market for commodities produced for sale. They should be consumers, but they cannot be because they are unable to buy."

THE "HOME DEFENCE" PRETEXT is again being used to gloss over the new armament race in which the Great Powers are again engaged. Five and a half millions a year is presently to be spent on the Air Force, and 82 squadrons provided. The Governments are now busy preparing for the next war.

MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD, speaking at a Britain and India demonstration in the Queen's Hall, urged that the Indian settlers in Kenya should have the same political rights as the white settlers. Mr. Macdonald said the problem is complicated: it is, however, quite simple: let there be equal rights for all inhabitants of Kenya, not excepting those who have first claim to consideration—the

In its proper acceptance, "theory" means the completed result of philosophical induction from experience.—Mills.

The present-day motto is: "One man six books." A device should be inscribed: "Six men one book"—Spiller.

COMMENTS ON THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE. SIDNEY WEBB AS CHAIRMAN.

Mr. Webb's address to the Labour Party clearly reveals his conception of Socialism. It has not advanced, but rather receded and grown smaller with the passing years. The extreme divergence between Mr. Webb's idea of Socialism and our own is demonstrated in the following passages from his speech:

"This translation of Socialism into practicable projects, to be adopted one after another, is just the task in which we have been engaged for a whole generation, with the result that, on every side, fragments of our proposals have already been put successfully into operation by town and county councils, and the national Government itself, and have now become accepted as commonplaces by the average man. The whole nation has been imbuing Socialism without realising it! It is now time for the subconscious to rise into consciousness."

To-day what the world needed was no less government but more. It was because they wanted more government internationally (and thereby a wider measure of national freedom in any real sense) that they supported the League of Nations, and sought to render it both more democratic and more and more effective as an instrument of world control."

The Greater Evils.

Mr. Webb's summing up of what he considers the most outstanding evils of the moment, and his immediate proposals for reform, show that his foreign policy bears a very close relationship to that of Mr. Asquith, whilst his home policy is anything but Socialist, is intensely bureaucratic, and has no relation to the cause of proletarian emancipation and wage-slavery.

He summed up the "three dominant features of economic life to-day demanding the consideration of every statesman" as follows:

(1) The supersession of free competition amongst Capitalists by trusts and monopolies.

Evidently Mr. Webb desires legislation to limit the development of trusts. In that proposal he is following in the vain footsteps of President Roosevelt. Though Mr. Webb frequently proclaims that he is not a Marxian, it seems odd that he, a lover of bureaucratic centralisation and State control, should advocate an artificially imposed return to Capitalist competition.

The reformist, however, is usually inconsistent.

(2) The dominating influence of the very rich in the Government and the Press.

This is a factor which Mr. Webb has been forced partially to grasp, but his realisation of it is very dim. Otherwise he would not believe, as he said in his speech, that French aggression in the Ruhr springs from a "fear complex." He would know that the controlling influence behind the invasion is that of the very rich, motivated by the desire for further enrichment.

Unemployment.

As to that, Mr. Webb says the Labour Party has a way out. The Labour Party Unemployment Bill, to deal with, not to prevent unemployment, is, however, published. Mr. Webb has probably drafted it; it is a dismal monstrosity bristling with Orders in Council and relegating the unemployed to Labour Colonies.

The ordinary workman is quite unaware that this Bill is supposed to be his; he would certainly disown the child as a changeling if he knew what the Bill contains.

The Capital Levy.

As to Mr. Webb's further proposals, first comes the Capital Levy, as Mr. Webb described it:

"A war debt redemption levy on fortunes exceeding £5,000 in graduated proportion to the ability to pay, sufficient to redeem the main bulk of the debt."

Mr. Webb advocated the Capital Levy as a relief to trade and industry, urging that at present £1,000,000 a day has to be taken out of industry in taxation before wages are paid or profits made.

It is interesting that Mr. Webb should be so solicitous to assist the Capitalist manufacturer, and that the Capitalist manufacturer should be so anxious to avoid receiving assistance.

If the great industrialists are called on to pay a proportion of their capital to the Government and get a reduced income tax in return, as promised by the Labour Party, they will create debenture shares which the National Debt investor, whom the Government has re-paid, will take up in order to employ the returned capital and thereby secure interest upon it. The industrial capitalist will thus pay interest on the debentures instead of income tax to the Government.

If the bankers and financial capitalists have to hand over a part of their capital to the Government, they will in return be repaid the amount they invested in the National Debt, as well as having to pay reduced income tax on the rest of their capital. The financiers will see to it that they make a profit on the transaction whichever way it goes. They are more than a match for Mr. Webb and his colleagues in that respect.

We do not think that the Capital Levy will make for the trade improvement the Labour Party promises; the very rich will create financial stringency and upheavals to attain their ends, whilst the Labour Party, with its programme of gradual change, will not attempt to break the power of the very rich.

In any case, the Capital Levy concerns only the very rich and the moderately rich; the wage-earner pays neither income tax nor the levy directly. The productive workers produce the wealth that maintains all the non-producers, whether very rich or moderately so. That position will not be changed by the Capital Levy.

Foreign Policy.

As to foreign policy, Mr. Webb advocated the abolition of passports and Customs barriers. These, of course, are merely Liberal measures.

If Europe is not ready for a European Custom's Union, he urged a unified railway and canal administration from Astrakhan to Algiers. It is interesting that Mr. Webb, like all the other imperialists, reserves such proposals for the territories of other people. Even under the Labour Party he does not suggest any internationalisation of administration in what the British Empire has abandoned.

To the accompaniment of some moral platitudes he stated that the Labour Party policy "would promptly assert for this country that leading position in the concert of Europe which the present Government has abandoned."

Thus Mr. Webb stood revealed as an Imperialist, desiring that his country should be "cook of the walk" in Europe. Thereby he showed himself more reactionary and dangerous than many Liberals. The Webbs, be it remembered, supported both the Boer War and the late war—and these are called Socialists!

Mr. Webb further indicated his view that Germany must pay "to the limit of economic capacity" for the devastation in France and Belgium, and to compensate civilian victims of torpedo and bomb.

Will it be Mr. Webb, the jingo bureaucratic Imperialist, for whom the King will send if, and when, the Labour Party secures a Parliamentary majority?

The Labour Party followed its reformist and anti-Socialist policy with consistency when it rejected the affiliation of the Right-Wing Communist Party by 2,880,000 to 866,000 and refused to extend its whips to

Mr. Walton Newbold by 2,270,000 votes to 219,000.

Opening the Door to the Yellows.

Very significant was the decision of the Conference to repeal the clause put in last year to exclude the C.P.G.B., to the effect that no one may be a delegate who belongs to an organisation having for one of its objects the return of candidates other than those endorsed by the Labour Party or approved as running in association with the Labour Party.

Mr. Henderson, in moving the resolution, said that the clause could be interpreted to exclude an official of the Parliamentary Labour Party who is also a member of the National Executive of the Party. Mr. Henderson did not indicate the individual to whom he referred or the organisation to which he belongs.

If we were in the Labour Party we should certainly want to know the facts, so that we might judge whether the person in question was a fit member of the Labour Party. The result of these manoeuvres is that the Union of Mr. Havelock Wilson, which opposes the Labour Party, is represented at the Conference, whilst the C.P.G.B., which is now ready to be its obedient servant, is shut out.

The position of the C.P.G.B. is, to say the least, humiliating.

IRISH NEWS.

MARY COMEFORD ON HUNGER-STRIKE IN KILMAINHAM.

Her friends have feared a long time for Mary Comford that she would not survive this fight, the rancour of the enemy against her seemed to be as strong as is the affection of her friends. She was fired at more than once while cycling and driving on one occasion a bullet pierced her hat. Her relations felt actually relieved when she was arrested, thinking that in prison her life would be safe.

She was arrested in January last, and brought to Mountjoy Prison, where a protest against overcrowding was being made at the time. She co-operated in this protest, helping to throw out a bed. As a punishment, she and Sheila Humphries were removed to the criminal wing. There they found themselves forced to associate with syphilitic convicts and to use the same vessels. They demanded to be separated from these women and to be given their rights (including letters) as prisoners of war.

No notice was taken of their demands, and they started a hunger-strike. During the hunger-strike Mary Comford, for waving her hand to a comrade in the political wing, was fired at by a sentry and wounded in the leg. The great loss of blood which resulted, in conjunction with the continued hunger-strike, reduced her to a very weak condition. Then their rights were restored, and for a while the two girls were treated well.

But Mary's battles were not over. On March 26th came the removal from Mountjoy to the North Dublin Union. Women from Oriel House, of a degraded and brutal type, were sent to strip and search the prisoners. Prisoners who resisted any part of their disgusting proceedings were attacked by them with violence. Miss Nora Spillane, one of the deportees, gave the following account of their behaviour:

"Mary Comford was so badly beaten about the head that she had to have three stitches by the medical officer. Mary Degan received a black eye. Sheila Gaughran and Peg Deleny were flung downstairs. Eileen Barry's (Kevin's sister) clothes were dragged off her and she was treated very roughly. Rose Killen's (London deportee) dress was cut off her, and she was subjected to great indignities."

Sorcha MacDermott (London deportee) was knocked on the floor by five Cumann na Saoirse women and stripped of her shoes and stockings and dress, held down by Harry

Mangan (Prison Adjutant), who knelt on her while the women beat her with her own shoes. Two other military men, whom she afterwards identified in the presence of the Governor, then took her in a corner, forced her to her knees while they twisted her wrists till she fainted. When she recovered consciousness she was out in the passage lying on the floor partially dressed, and her clothes were saturated with water which they had flung on her. Her face is bruised and her lip cut, and her body covered with bruises. Her wrist is badly sprained, her arm in a sling, and she is in bed in a helpless condition, suffering severely from the strain and the shock.

I saw Mary Comford in the North Dublin Union, and saw the scar on her head. The day after my release (May 6th) she made a daring escape.

In spite of the cessation of all hostilities by the Republicans, she was hunted down and was re-arrested on Friday last and taken to Kilmainham, the worst of all the prisons.

She has been on hunger-strike since her arrest. Her mother's request to see the Governor, doctor, or chaplain of the prison has been refused.

If the war is not over, Mary Comford is a prisoner of war and should be allowed to communicate with her friends. If the war is over, her re-arrest is an act of wanton aggression by the Free State troops, and her continued detention, on hunger-strike, a most provocative action on the part of the Free State Government, and one calculated to aggravate the growing feeling that the Ministry are determined to have "war at any cost."

They have boasted of a complete victory; but it seems they cannot yet afford to cease the persecution of this girl. Should she die on hunger-strike in Kilmainham Gaol, the campaign against the Republican women of Ireland will have reached a climax long threatened and foreseen.

Habeas Corpus proceedings are being taken on behalf of James Connolly's daughter, Mrs. Nora Connolly O'Brien, who is held prisoner by the Free State.

The Irish Republican Bulletin tells a terrible story, so terrible that we can hardly bring ourselves to insert it:

"A Free State officer who has returned from Kerry was telling me of some terrible things done by Commandant Handcox in his area (Tralee). Handcox tied a prisoner's feet with rope, fastened one end of the rope to a lorry, and drove off at top speed for 22 miles. There was hardly anything left of the prisoner at the end of the journey, bits of his flesh being scattered in all directions. On another occasion Handcox went to a house to arrest a supposed 'Irregular.' There was no one there but the man and his mother. Handcox fired and wounded him in the leg. The mother screamed and shouted to Handcox that he had wounded her son. Thereupon Handcox fired six more shots into the man's body as he lay on the ground, saying: 'I've killed him now!'"

When will they end it by letting them have that Republic?

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## COMMUNIST WORKERS' MOVEMENT.

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Sunday, July 1st.—Finsbury Park, 7 p.m.: W. Hall, N. Smyth, Brockwell Park, 7 p.m., J. Welsh and others.

### INDOOR MEETINGS.

Saturday, June 30.—Builders' Labourers' Hall, 84 Blackfriars Road, 7.30 p.m. Debate: Sylvia Pankhurst and Guy Aldred. Admission 6d.

### OTHER MEETINGS.

Sunday, July 1st.—Brotherhood Church, Southgate Road, 7 p.m.: Sylvia Pankhurst.

## "DREADNOUGHT" SUMMER SALE.

Comrades are urged to get busy collecting and making goods for the Summer Sale and Garden Party in aid of the "Workers' Dreadnought," which is to be held shortly. Books, pictures and drawings, furniture, clothing, farm produce, groceries, cakes, sweets, jams, toys, fancy goods, hats, shoes, tobacco, tools, etc., etc., will all be gratefully received.

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