

# THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

Socialism, Internationalism, Votes for All.

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## THE TOWER OF BABEL. By STEFAN ZWEIG.

Translated from *Le Carmel*, Geneva, April and May, 1916.

The profoundest legends are those which tell of the origin of our race. The symbols of the dawn of human life have enormous poetic power, and these symbols apply, spontaneously as it were, to those great moments of subsequent history wherein the life of races is renewed and when the birth of important epochs is taking place.

Now in the Bible, in its opening pages, immediately following the legend of creation from chaos, we find a wonderful myth. When they had barely emerged from the abyss of the unknown, when they were still plunged in the twilight of ignorance, men united in a common endeavour. They lived in a world strange to them, a world without means of communication, full of obscurity and danger; above them was heaven, serene, pure, and eternal, mirror of the Infinite, towards which they conceived an ardent desire. They met, therefore, and spoke as follows: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven; and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Joining hands in the work, they kneaded clay, baked bricks, and began to build them a tower which was to reach into the hall of God, to touch the stars, and to attain to the white, dead face of the moon.

From the distant heavens God looked down upon the petty effort, smiling, doubtless, as He perceived men, minute in the vast distance, working like

tiny insects as they assembled things smaller even than themselves, pieces of kneaded clay and carven stone. It must have seemed to him a game, an innocent and somewhat foolish game, which men were playing beneath him, animated by their confused longing for the eternal. But soon he saw the foundations of the tower growing larger and larger, for men were living in a common understanding, working without pause, helping one another. And God said in his heart: "Never will they cease building the tower until they have finished it." For the first time he recognised the greatness of the spirit which he himself had breathed into mankind. He perceived that this spirit differed from his own, which, since the six days of creation, had entered a state of eternal repose. This was another spirit, dangerous and formidable, a spirit of indefatigable obstinacy, which would abandon nothing before completion. For the first time God feared men, for they were strong from the moment in which they became, like himself, a Unity. He began to ask how he could destroy their work and break their power. Recognising that he would not prove the stronger unless men ceased to work together, he sowed discord among them, saying: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Then for the first time was God cruel to the men whom he had made.

Carrying out his harsh decision, he stretched forth his hand against those who were working harmoniously and zealously, shoulder to shoulder, and touched their spirits. The bitterest hour of human history had arrived. Suddenly, during the night, in the midst of their labours, they were no longer able to understand one another. They shouted each to each, but not one of them could find any meaning in the other's words, and since they had lost their common understanding, they became inflamed with mutual anger. They overturned their bricks, they threw away their pickaxes and their trowels, they quarrelled and they fought, and at length all fled the scene of their common labours, each man seeking his own house and his own country. Dispersing through all the fields and all the forests of the world, they built henceforward each man for himself, each constructing only his own narrow city, whose walls did not ascend to the clouds, did not stretch upwards towards the habitation of God, towns which sufficed merely to provide shelter at nightfall. The mighty Tower of Babel was abandoned to its fate. Its battlements, which had looked upon the heavens so near at hand, were attacked by rain and wind; one by one they fell to the ground and were broken into fragments. Soon nothing remained but a legend whose memory was preserved

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## WORKSHOP NOTES by W. F. WATSON.

### THE ADMIRALTY AND SHOP COMMITTEES.

Official recognition has always been the death-blow to the power of the workers' movements and we fear it. We remember what the repeal of the Combination Laws meant in 1832, the Trade Union Act in 1871; and now the Government is giving official recognition to Shop Stewards and projecting Industrial Councils. The Shop Stewards' Movement has become powerful of late. Unofficial in character, extremely active in its operations, it has become a serious menace to the stability of the capitalist State. Hence the attempts to surround the movement with an official atmosphere and to establish State Industrial Councils.

We understand that the Admiralty is getting busy in this direction, and I am asked to express my opinion thereon. I say to my comrades in the Dockyard Towns: It is impossible for us to expect to achieve our freedom through State channels. The very most these councils can do is to make the capitalist system a bit more tolerable; it is very certain the promoters thereof have not in their minds the abolition of the wage-system.

I urge the dockyard workers to build up their own Workers' Committees, upon which shall be represented every grade of worker of both sexes. The Workers' Committees should be erected apart from, and independent of, any Employers' Committee or organisation. The functions of the Workers' Committee must be to attend to the internal organisation of the dockyards, settling petty grievances, tabulating demands, and in every shape and form perfecting the organisation preparatory to taking over control. That and that only is the real road to emancipation.

Since writing the above I have received, from a dockyard comrade a copy of a circular letter issued by the Admiralty and entitled, 'Proposed Committees of Officers and Employees.' It is an amazing document and for sheer audacity beats anything of its kind; and it proves everything I have said in my criticism. Readers should note that the proposed committees consist of officers and employees. Apparently, officers are not considered to be employees. It is proposed that Shop Committees and a Yard Committee shall be set up at each dockyard or depot.

There will be a committee for each shop and one for each large trade which is not included in a shop. Here is a device to foster sectionalism. Why should it be thought necessary to set up a committee for a trade, when a shop committee would embrace everyone working in a given shop? It would certainly enable the authorities to play off one committee against another. Representatives must be nominated by employees who have served not less than five years in civilian employ-

ment under the Admiralty. Why should a worker have to serve five years before becoming eligible to sit on a committee? From the workman's point of view it must be remembered that after five years a worker generally becomes "established" and, thinking he has a permanent job develops into a state of apathy and fear that by any manifestation of activity he will lose his "deferred pay." The most active workers are those who rarely stay long in any shop.

And the functions. Ah, yes! the functions!! The Shop Committee should discuss amongst themselves any question as issue, and having arrived at a decision, should bring the matter to the notice of the officers of the department concerned, and thence, if necessary, to the head of the department. Any one conversant with dockyard life knows that the very thing the workers are up against is the arrogance of minor officials. And yet, says this circular, all grievances are first to be taken to them! Several points are cited as possible subjects for discussion at Shop Committee meetings, such as the comfort of workers, output, piece-prices and dilution. Not a word about hours, or workshop control! As to the committee's times of meeting: the circular states that the Shop Committee shall meet *outside working hours*, but, if the officers wish to discuss any point with the committee, a meeting may take place during working hours. Very nice, too!

The Yard Committee will consist of employees elected from the Shops Committees and will be joined by officers nominated by the Superintendent. The Superintendent (or an officer deputed by him) will preside! The functions of the Yard Committee are to deal with all matters submitted to it by any of the Shop Committees, or by Heads of Departments, and also any questions that the Superintendent may refer for consideration. Thus it will have a self-elected chairman with absolute power to nominate the officers and to refer any question for consideration.

Further than that the Superintendent is the convener of the meetings which are to be held in working hours. Exigencies of space prevent me from dealing more fully with this circular, but I am considering writing a pamphlet upon it. Let me emphasise the advice I have given above. Carry on with the formation of your own Shops and Yard Committees. Have your meetings in your own time and in your own way. Formulate your own demands and then, when strong enough, give effect to them.

### A.S.E. AND PARLIAMENT.

The A.S.E. is asking for six additional Parliamentary candidates, and amongst the eighty-one aspirants for these positions we regret to note the names of

T. W. Coates of Edinburgh, David Kirkwood of the Clyde, and Jack Sheppard of Woolwich. We know these three men to be of unimpeachable integrity and uncompromising fighters in the working-class movement, and we do not question the purity of their motives in desiring to carry that fight to the House of Camouflage. But do they really think that by attaching themselves to a spineless compromiser Labour Party they will advance the revolutionary movement? Has the Russian Revolution taught them nothing? We sincerely hope they will not become Parliamentary candidates and that they will concentrate their energies on the Workers' Committee Movement.

### AMALGAMATION.

The Sub-Committee appointed by the A.S.E. Recalled Delegate Meeting to draft a scheme of Amalgamation has issued its report and suggestions.

Whilst congratulating the Committee on the fearless way in which they have tackled the financial difficulties, and the generosity with which it is proposed to treat the full-time officials, we are on the whole disappointed. Even if all the proposals are given effect it will merely mean an amalgamation of Craft Unions. No scheme of amalgamation will be of any value unless it has for its immediate object the organisation of all workers, men and women, skilled and unskilled, into an Industrial Union, and for its definite aim complete control of the industry. We suggest as a suitable title for the amalgamated body: "The Engineering Workers' Industrial Union." The basis of the Union should be the recognition of the class struggle. Its structure should be so altered as to make its administrative bodies occupational in character, instead of geographical. It should definitely wage war on Capital and its Executive, the State.

Much time is still being wasted on the north-east coast in reconciling demarcation differences. It is now proposed to fix up a Demarcation Court with a chairman selected by the Chief Commissioners' Department, and two trade union assessors in preference to a single arbiter. It is monstrous to think that in these days trade unionists should fritter away valuable time on such stupid matters. Have the north-east coast workers read the pamphlet 'Demarcation: a Tragi-Comedy in One Act'? We suggest to the local Workers' Committee that it send to this office for a bundle.

Brother Vickers of Chesterfield has received the A.S.E. award of merit. No, Comrades, it is not Sir Albert Vickers.

A.S.E. Organiser, Div. 12, in reporting his attendance before the special tribunal of the Committee of Production says he had the unique experience of hearing an employer quote an old copy of our Correspondence List. There is nothing surprising about that. The Capitalist press is generally the first to get hold of our Monthly Journal. And members of the Committee of Production are in close contact with 110 Peckham Road.



## WHATS' ON?

W.S.F. FIXTURES  
OUT DOOR

FRIDAY, MAY 24th.  
St. Stephen's Road, Bow.—11.30 A.M., Miss Price.

SATURDAY, MAY 25th.  
Great Push for Socialism, Peace, and Votes for All in the St. Pancras District.—Meet at 44 Malden Road (nearest tube station Chalk Farm) at 2.45 P.M. and 5.30 P.M. Meetings at 3 P.M. and 6 P.M. Speakers: Miss Price, Mrs. Walker, and Mr. Hogben.

SUNDAY, MAY 26th.  
Osborn Street, Whitechapel.—11.45 A.M., Mrs. Walker.

Salmon and Ball, Bethnal Green.—11.45 A.M., Miss Price, Miss Beamish.

Finsbury Park.—3.30 P.M., Miss Lambie.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29th.  
Queen's Crescent, Kentish Town.—6 P.M., Mrs. Cressall.

FRIDAY, MAY 31st.  
Protoria Road, Walthamstow.—5.30 P.M., Miss Price.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1st.  
Great Push in Camberwell.

## TOWER OF BABEL—continued from front page.

solely in the songs of poets, and humanity forgot the great work of its youth.

Hundreds and thousands of years passed away, years in which men continued to speak different tongues. They made frontiers between their fields and their countries, frontiers between their creeds and their customs; they lived as strangers, and when any one crossed his neighbour's landmark it was only with intent to plunder. Throughout centuries and millenniums unity was unknown, exclusive pride and selfish toil prevailed. Yet, as in a dream, there still lingered from their common childhood some vague reminiscence of the great work; for as, little by little, they attained maturity, they began to question one another, and to search instinctively for the lost good. Certain bold spirits took the first steps, visiting foreign kingdoms, and bringing messages back. By degrees the peoples entered into bonds of friendship, each learning something from the others. They exchanged knowledge, goods of price, and metals, and they gradually discovered that divergence of tongues need not make them strangers, and that the frontiers separating their lands were not impassable chasms. Their philosophers learned that the science of a single nation could never embrace the immensity of things; before long the men of science, in their turn, came to understand that the exchange of knowledge would accelerate the progress of the common work; poets brought home the words of their brethren in other lands, and music, which alone was free from the narrow barriers of language, inspired the souls of all with its own spirit of unity. Men came to love life better now that they knew unity to be still possible despite the confusion of tongues. They even thanked God for that which he had allotted them as a punishment. They thanked him for that he had made them manifold and diverse, since through this they had been enabled to draw manifold enjoyments from the world. Through their very differences they could appreciate more keenly and love more dearly that by which they were united.

Once again, little by little, upon the soil of Europe, there thus began anew the building of the Tower of Babel, monument of common brotherhood, sign of human solidarity. No longer was it constructed of crude material substance, it was no longer with bricks and mortar that men endeavoured to reach the heavens. Their new tower was builded of the most subtle and indestructible substance known to earth, spirit, and experience, the sublimest essences of the soul. Wide and deep were the foundations: the wisdom of the East had helped to delve them, Christian teachings furnished them with stability, and the classical world provided the solid masonry. All that humanity had ever accomplished and all that the earth-spirit had ever effected, was worked into the tower, and its walls continued to grow upwards. Every nation brought its contribution to this European monument; the younger peoples, pressing eagerly forward towards the tower, learning from their elders, gave their pristine energies in exchange for the wisdom of experience. Each learned skill from the others, and the common ardour was exalted by the very fact that every one worked after his own manner, for if any did more work than the others, this immediately became a spur to neighbours, and the differences which from time to time broke out between certain nations did not suffice to check the common work.

Thus grew the tower, the new Tower of Babel, and never had its summit mounted so high as in our own time, never before had the spirits of the nations experienced so intimate a mutual interfusion; never before had the international relationships of science been so gigantic a web; never before had commerce woven so gigantic a web; never before had the men of Europe given so much love at once to their respective countries and to the

## INDOOR

MONDAY, MAY 27th.  
44 Malden Road, St. Pancras W.S.F.—2.30 P.M., Miss Horsfall.  
400 Old Ford Road.—8 P.M., Bow Branch Social.

THURSDAY, MAY 30th.  
29b Lincoln's Inn Fields.—7.30 P.M., Mrs. Butler: 'Why Women should Vote for Labour'; Mrs. Cole: 'The Present Outlook.'

## OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

TUESDAY, MAY 28th. — WALTHAMSTOW LEAGUE OF RIGHTS.  
William Morris Hall, Somers Road.—2.30 P.M., Mrs. Sizer, and others.

HELP THE "MOTHER'S ARMS" DAY  
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world at large. Already, in this intoxication of fellowship, they seemed to feel themselves in heaven, for the poets of all nations have in recent years been singing hymns to celebrate the beauties of life and of creation. So near was the completion of their work that men, like the builders of the mythical tower, were feeling that they themselves were as gods. The monument continued to grow, comprising within itself all that was most sacred to humanity, and its building proceeded to the accompaniment of a whirlwind of music.

But God, looking down from on high, immortal as humanity, contemplated with alarm the renewed growth of the tower which he had long since destroyed. Taking fright once again, he recognised once again that only by sowing discord, only by making men unable to understand one another, could he gain the victory over mankind. With the ancient cruelty, he sent confusion among them, and after the lapse of thousands and thousands of years, the old horror was renewed. One night, the men who had been peacefully working side by side ceased to understand one another, and, being unable to understand one another, they became inflamed with mutual anger. Once more they ceased their labours, making of their tools weapons which they turned against their brethren. Men of science made a weapon of science; men of technical skill made weapons of their discoveries; poets made weapons of their songs; priests made weapons of their creeds. All which, a moment before, had been an instrument in the work of life, became an instrument of death in the hands of a madman.

Such is the terrible moment through which we are now passing. The new Tower of Babel, the great monument of the spiritual unity of Europe, has been abandoned, its workers have been scattered. Its battlements still rise towards heaven, its invisible masonry continues to dominate the world-wide confusion, but in default of a common continuous and sustained effort it will fall into oblivion, just as fell that earlier tower in the age of fable. There are many men in all the nations who seem to covet the tower, who would be well pleased to withdraw from the titanic edifice everything that their own nation has contributed to it, indifferent as to whether this would involve the crumbling of the entire structure—there are men who would fain reach heaven and the infinite through the unassisted energies of their own race. But there are others who regard it as impossible for a single race or a single nation to attain this end, seeing that the united energies of Europe during centuries of heroic communion were barely adequate to the task. Such men believe with all their soul that the monument must be reconstructed in this Europe of ours, must be rebuilt where it was first begun, and not in some remote corner of the world, in America or in Asia. The present hour is not propitious to the recommencement of the common activities. Too great, still, is the confusion into which God has thrown our spirits, and years may perhaps elapse before men will resume their task, working like brothers shoulder to shoulder, in the peaceful rivalry of the endeavour to reach the infinite. But we shall have to return to our building, each man returning to the place he abandoned in the hour of confusion. For many years, perhaps, we shall not be able to see one another, and shall hardly receive tidings one from another. But if each does his own work in his own place with all the ancient fervour, the tower will again rise towards the heavens, and the nations will meet once more upon its summit. For that which summons us to the work must not be the pride of an isolated people, pluming itself upon a fancied superiority of race or of language. The summons is that of our ancient Ancestor, our Spirit, who remains unchanged amid all legendary forms—the anonymous architect of Babel, the Genius of humanity, whose life and joy it is to strive with God, his creator.

[The writer of the above article is an Austrian].

## MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

THE MOTHER'S ARMS CLINIC, DAY NURSERY, AND MONTESSORI CLASS; also CLINIC, 20 RAILWAY STREET, POPLAR, and CLINIC, 63 ST. LEONARD STREET, SOUTH BROMLEY.—Garments for Babies, Children, and Adults, Maturity Outfits, etc., Children's Toys, Pot Plants, Flowers and Branches, etc., always wanted.

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The fact of a married man becoming automatically POORER at the birth of each child constitutes a cruel wrong to all children, and until each child has 7s. a week in its own individual right, as an infant citizen, suffering, war, disease, and poverty can never be abolished. Let us all demand this from our different Governments now, before it may be too late.

S. MACKENZIE KENNEDY. [Adv.]

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by  
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## IMPORTANT

Those of our Readers who buy the "Dreadnought" from Newsagents, are asked to place their order in advance to avoid disappointment.

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