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PARLIAMENT AND REVOLUTION

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

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EDITED BY J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

The subjects to be dealt with in this series concern the vital issues of the day—political, social and industrial. The most important questions which confront society in these critical times will be treated boldly and adequately by recognized authorities who can write clearly and entertainingly. The series is intended to appeal, primarily, to the general public, to every intelligent man and woman, but it is hoped that it will also prove of value to the students of sociology, politics and economics.

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DEMOCRACY

EVEN before the War came to displace in the minds of people thoughts of ordered progress by change of opinion and put in their stead those of violent conquest of power, impatience was being shown with Parliament and representative Government as the means of expressing the popular will; even the popular will itself was being analyzed out of existence. James Mill's article on "Government" which appeared in 1820 in the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, expressed the faith of the Parliamentary Radicals. This was very simple. Give the people the vote, the argument ran, and Parliament will respond to popular desires. "If the community itself

were the choosing body, the interest of the community and that of the choosing body would be the same." All the selfishness of the ruling classes will disappear because the ruling classes will themselves disappear. This was the argument for Democracy. Its foundation rested upon the assumption that the enfranchised masses had first of all an abiding interest in their own concerns, in the next place that they had the intelligence to find ways and means for producing the results which they desired, or that they would trust to guides who themselves had the intelligence and the common interest. The experiences of the last three-quarters of a century have thrown doubts upon these assumptions. Even if we regard the election of December, 1918, as being a special manifestation of passionate blindness and an exploitation by political leaders, moved by unusually low standards of honor, of the emotions of a country just released from the horrible stress of war and intoxicated by the

delight of victory, elections have not shown on the part of the masses that vigilant watchfulness and that consistency in thought and interest which James Mill assumed. Therefore, there have arisen anti-Parliamentary movements; new ideas have sprung up regarding the relations between political and industrial action; new theories of the State have appeared; new philosophies of mass action have been propounded; new proposals for Parliamentary government made; and, finally, the Bolshevist revolution and the establishment of the Soviet system in Russia have spread abroad a totally new conception of political control, of proletariat action, and of political democracy.

The danger to-day is twofold. On the one hand we may refuse to learn from experience; we may cling blindly to old habits and assumptions, and may miss the opportunities for effective change which the shattering blows of war have given us, and those opportunities

will pass by and not come again. On the other hand, impelled by revolutionary enthusiasm, we may make changes which will appear to be great, but will be in reality superficial, and will not touch the real problems of government and political authority, and thus we shall doom the coming generation to disappointment, and to that worst of all kinds of reaction when the active minds of the mass give up the struggle for liberty in despair of ever succeeding. Is there a single person who has been in the Socialist movement for twenty years who, looking back, is not saddened by the long disrupting controversies raised by mere will-o'-the-wisps who today are forgotten or disgraced, but who in their time distracted the movement, dazzled it with their marsh flares, and misled it by their antics? The Socialist movement, on account of the complexities of the problems it raises, of the unexplored regions of human conduct which it has to traverse, of the assumptions which it has to make because experience has not yet

been acquired, is of all movements the one which ought never to lose a footing on reality whilst it stretches out to attain the ideal, one which ought never to lose balance in its progressive efforts. Men on a pilgrimage do not run hither and thither all day long after butterflies; they find their way by the sun and the stars. So, it is not good enough for us to fly from the State to National Guilds, or from Parliaments to Soviets, because public opinion has so often baffled us and because dishonest men are elected to the seats of princes. In what sense has representative democracy failed? Why has it failed? Can we devise a quicker acting and more certain method? Only when we have answered these questions are we in a position to make constructive proposals of our own or adopt with intelligence those of other people.

II

REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRACY

THE difficulties in the way of the successful working of Parliamentary representative government are many, and must be many, and they must provoke and dishearten those of keen political intelligence and definite purpose. The best that can be done for many institutions is to excuse them, not to justify them, but at the same time show how they may be reformed until they can be justified.

Democracy includes the passivity of a crowd of no settled opinions, no well-conceived aims, no policy, as well as the activity of sections which know what they are driving at and be-

lieve that they know how to get there. Everyone who works with and through public opinion works with a heavy handicap against him. At this present moment, we know the mass at its worst—a mass composed not of people who reflect, but of people who feel, its "opinion" like a sea lashed into storm by winds, not like a river flowing onwards in well-defined channels; its activities of the nature of demonstrations, not of thoughts; roused by cries, catchwords, and phrases, and appealed to through its simpler emotions. The mass mind in times like this is still the elemental mind of primitive man, and its rationale belongs to the instinct through which social cohesion grew rather than to the reason by which this social cohesion develops. Thus it can be moved by the highest moral idealism and at the same time inflamed by the blindest passions. It is both absurdly generous and brutally cruel; it is nonrational and irresponsible; it is blind to contradictions and inconsistencies because emotion

is not a continuous process of the intelligence, but a response to passing and temporary influences; it is in a continual condition of self-flattery.

But how can it be otherwise during a war? During wars many changes are born, rational and revolutionary, but they come to vigour only when the war itself has ended. We must be careful to discriminate between the various succeeding phases of the war mind. Wars are fought on the emotions of the primitive herd, when reason becomes a menace and must be curbed by an inflammatory and dishonest press and repressed by Defence of the Realm Acts; when moral temper which comes from a peaceful civilisation is weakness, and must be perverted or burnt up in ardent heat. War is a contradiction of everything which belongs to civilisation, and can be carried on only by the creation of the mentality which preceded civilisation. If an election, held under the conditions of the last, reproduces the features of a

mass meeting of a primitive village when its painted warriors returned in triumph, who can wonder? Bishops, professors, and clodhoppers alike were seized with the spirit which issues from beaten tom-toms. We can see them dance —aprons, hoods, fustian, all flying in the wind, ejaculating the woodland emotions of their arboreal forefathers in nervous English. Such is the nature of things. But this will pass, and the experience of the moment must not be regarded as normal or be made the reason for the creation of new forms of Government; nor must the destructive emotions of war be carried into the peace for reconstructive purposes. They inevitably determine our Treaties of Peace, but we must treat them with grave suspicion as the architects of a governing democracy. A Treaty of Peace is always the voice of war, leaving war conditions untouched and assuming, as Sir Douglas Haig has said, that there is to be "a next time." That arises from the weakness of man's moral nature which

makes him put his trust in force. The war emotion, however, need not be carried into domestic affairs. Nothing of permanent constructive value can come out of it.

Yet, even in ordinary times, and when democracy as we know it is working at its best, Mill's dream of a vigilant community electing a body, "the interest of which would be identical with that of the community," has never been realised. A great and determining section of the mass does not think for itself; it divides on trivialities; it will sacrifice the interests of to-morrow to its appetite to-day; tinsel allures it; when its representatives come before it it is not well equipped to judge them. Slowly, very slowly, do intelligence and reflection permeate the mass, though the leaven is there and will work more quickly when we revise our educational methods and are not content to send from our schools millions of people whose capacity to read only makes them the prey of the most worthless and mentally devastating printed

matter, and when we give to our "respectable" people some worthier ideals of life than those which degrade the taste and the intelligence of the bulk of our middle classes to-day.

When there is a great mass of electors possessing no conception of community well-being and no political interest beyond the excitement which an election affords, political majorities are but the temporary creations of active minorities, and these are enormously aided if they have been successful in embodying their cause in attractive catchwords that pass as coins. Until intellectual coinage is minted by the individual at his own mint, it will remain debased. The winning of majorities is thus an art, and in recent years, owing to the creation of a press which doctors news and pursues the policy of keeping its readers ill-informed, and to the over-development of party machinery and the creation of a professional body of political agents, the growth of intelligent political opinion has been discouraged and the electioneer-

ing art has become too much of a trick. The interests of party—abused—have created a condition of things which tends to lower the value of political decisions. The danger to a healthy public life is not the professional politician, but the professional political agent; the evil with which we are faced is not so much a stupid jury, but a system of trial which prevents the jury getting at the facts, which withdraws its thoughts from the evidence and obtains from it a verdict upon false issues. Given free play and serious discussion, and reason will win, but electoral methods are designed to prevent that. That is the real evil which might be made a justification for anti-Parliamentary creeds. That is the phenomenon which can be made to justify the argument that majorities are the creation of capitalist minorities, that by democratic methods we can never effect more than superficial changes upon Society, that democracy can never be self-redeeming, just as a sunken slum population can never be the in-

strument for effecting decent house building. I do not accept the conclusion, but the argument in favour of it is strong.

Here I shall leave it for the time being and pursue the enquiry into the more legitimate influences that move this mass of no steady political convictions, but which gives us Parliamentary majorities.

"Unless the Representative Body is chosen by a portion of the community the interest of which cannot be made to differ from that of the community," says James Mill in the article to which I have referred, "the interest of the community will infallibly be sacrificed to the interest of the rulers." Mill believed such a failure to be impossible; if possible "the prospect of mankind is deplorable." To-day we know that political disputes nearly all turn upon what "the interest of the community" means. Simple and unenlightened experience does not show it. A thousand answers would be given by a thousand electors if asked how

they conceived national interests in relation to their own needs. How are these political opinions regarding "the interest of the community" formed?

Amongst intelligent people they are formed primarily by rational opinion and interest. "The interest of the community" is not a static but a dynamic conception. Every living Society throws up rational movements of constructive criticism—as Capitalism throws up Socialism—which tends to modify and transform it, so that in social history we have a record of progressive change similar to that embedded in the rocks. This evolutionary movement of the constructive reason comes into conflict with habit and interest, the two great conservative forces of Society. But interest is always divided. There are the interests of the dispossessed, which the social idealists use for constructive purposes, and the interests of the possessors which ally themselves with habit to maintain the *status quo*. Normally, this con-

flict is carried on by discussion, by appeals for majorities, by trade union action, by legislation, by education, and a slow transformation takes place, the *status quo* always offering a resistance which is formidable, and which often means that as soon as any change takes place the system adapts itself to it, but is not changed itself. Thus the forces of revolution grow, until in the end the new system of idea and need becomes like wine in the old bottles of the *status quo,* and the question is, will the bottles burst? If the organisation of Society were like old wine bottles it would burst, but whether Society uses its powers or not it undoubtedly has the faculty of changing its bottles with its wine. Will it do so? That is the question in dispute between the schools of political action and of revolution. The one says that revolutionary ideas transform the structure of Society as they themselves progress; the other says that social structure is so rigid that only definite revolutionary acts can change it.

To-day we are in revolutionary times. War is always destructive of the social *status quo.* It rapidly produces new social relationships; it exposes the thoughts and the habits of peace to new criticisms; it gives classes and interests a new value in society, and gives importance to the lowest classes because of their proved utility*; it shows that within each community there has been a conflict of interests which in times of national stress threatens destruction; it stirs up stagnant waters and leaves them unrestful; it transforms opposition and discontent into destructive force and revolutionary methods. Thus during the war Capitalism as the ruling power in Society has been challenged. Labour has had to be made a national co-partner (if many representatives of Labour were content with a mean place in the co-partnership or placed their own importance before the advan-

* Note Mr. Asquith's speech, in which he argued that because women made munitions he had been converted to women's franchise.

tage of the movement which they were created to advance, that does not affect what actually took place); its place in the workshop has had to be admitted to be unsatisfactory; its subordination to Capitalism has come to be regarded as a menace to internal tranquillity; the profiteering characteristics of Capitalism have become offensive to the community; national control of mines and railways has been proved to be necessary; such enquiries as that conducted by the Coal Commission have become possible; and the revelations of wholesale pillage of national wealth by landlords and capitalists have been made to a sensitive public—a public which is little inclined to hesitate before it acts. That the war has done.

This destruction of habit and shattering of the *status quo* have created revolutionary conditions not because they have unloosed agitators, but because they have awakened the reason of thinking people, the fears of others, and the acquisitiveness of still more, and also be-

cause they have taught the people that words and thoughts should be at once translated into action. We know, however, that all this will pass. These are the moments after a storm, when every feature of the landscape stands out in clear outline, when there is vigour in the air. The mists will rise again, familiarity will blind us both to good and to evil, and that the conflicting interests and reasons know. The question that intelligent Labour has to face is: Can this opportunity, before it passes, be seized to make revolutionary conditions fructify in organic social change? Or are Capitalism and exploitation after a period of diplomatic giving and taking, yielding and entrenching, to appear a few months hence masters of the new conditions as they were masters of the old? Labour sees the golden moments go, and if it would hasten to use them can it trust to democratic methods?

I have now returned to where I left the discussion on Democracy a page or two back.

Majorities are only the following of minorities, and to-day the governing minorities keep their power by the press they own, the conservative influence of habit, the natural passivity of masses of toilers, the degradation of the people which is kept up by drink, gambling, and attractions which blind them to their real needs. Thus Capitalism holds a position of double security because it is the existing form of Society, and because its wealth and other influences control the emotions and motives which determine the political actions of the mass. Thus Parliamentary government has become a capitalist institution and will remain a capitalist fortress. Its phrases are drawn from bourgeois conceptions of government. Revolution is therefore required to effect a real change in Society. Such in a few sentences is the doctrine which Lenin, the master mind of the Russian revolution, preaches. During the revolution the structure of Capitalism is to disappear, and with it must go

"the whole ideology and phraseology of the bourgeois democracy." Unless this is done the revolutionary conditions will pass and the people will still be in chains.

The revolution contained in this doctrine and method is not that of a new idea, but is the method of Capitalism adopted by Labour and adapted to meet its needs. Capitalism, assuming that majorities are passive and accept the thoughts and the wills of minorities, pursues a political policy of subjection which it carries on by reason of its wealth and its economic control of the existing order. Thus Democracy under Capitalism is capitalistic. We have now the dictatorship of the capitalist. Revolutionary Labour, also assuming that majorities are passive, adopts a policy of revolution to destroy the influence of Capitalism and give the Democracy a working-class form. Thus is Capitalism hoist with its own petard. It is the capitalist method turned into a recruiting sergeant for the wage-earn-

ers. It is the antagonism between Capital and Labour made critical by Labour arming itself from capitalist arsenals. And the capitalist has no reply except to meet force by force and resource by resource; except to hurl Denikin at the head of Lenin, not because Lenin is bad or because Denikin is good, but simply because Lenin must be crushed. For the same reason Labour is drawn to Lenin, not because it associates itself with all that Lenin does or stands for, but because he is fighting its battle, and because it is not deeply influenced by the accusations of tyranny and so on brought against him, for it knows that the accusers themselves have been guilty of the same faults, though they commit them in a more politic way, or in a way accepted by habit.

The Socialist position, however, needs to be clearly stated. We know perfectly well how much truth there is in the contention that Capitalism, in the way described, makes and keeps its majority, that an active minority makes

public opinion, and that a change in the structure of Society will very speedily produce a change in habit, and will quickly receive at any rate the passive acquiescence of the majority. We repudiate the right of the capitalist critics of the Russian Revolution to condemn the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, not only because their speeches show the most idiotic ignorance of the subject, but because their own actions and methods deprive them of the right of criticism. But Socialists ought to maintain a wider and higher view than that of capitalist subjection. A proletarian democracy dependent upon a mass, the political function of which is to receive the stamp of some governing minority, is unthinkable. The prospects of such a state are indeed deplorable. Lenin has himself, in a message to Hungary which was published in *L'Humanité* in July, 1919, admitted that the transition time of dictatorship during which Socialism is to emerge from Capitalism is to be prolonged. "A very long period of

transition," he says, "is necessary to pass from Capitalism to Socialism; the transformation of production is a difficult thing; we need time to transform all the conditions of life." When the meaning of this is considered it is ominous. The dictatorship, when the new order has to be protected by force, by censorships, by repression, is not to be a short thing; it is to be a long stage in the evolution of Society. If this dictatorship were left to combat with the internal forces of the country which it is ruling, it could not survive, and its short life would be one unbroken series of civil strife. No Socialist Party would tolerate such a thing for long. The opposition would not merely be that of a counter-revolution, but of the revolution itself. And, be it noted, Lenin's task of reconstruction—Russia being far less advanced in economic complexity than we are—is much lighter than ours would be, therefore the Russian transition should be of much shorter duration than ours. The only safeguard that such an at-

tempt at forcible retention of political power would have, would be for a foreign power to threaten the revolution and so unite all revolutionary sections—not in support of the dictatorship, but in opposition to the threatened invasion. Thus the Allies went to Lenin's aid by removing the fear of serious divisions in the camp of the revolution. They prevented the dictatorship from merging into democracy, and the means they adopted to strike at it only strengthened it.

I believe that one of two things will happen in Russia. The Moscow Government may fall, destroyed at last by the pressure of the Allies and the enormous expenditure of capitalists to procure its defeat. So far as one can see, however, this is no more likely to happen now than six months ago. Then this may happen: The Moscow Government will modify its position, as it has done already. It will abandon its absolute programme; it will recognise that, in order to keep up revolutionary ardour to carry

it through its first work, it simplified its problems in its imagination, and brought its Socialist New Earth nearer than it actually was; it will adopt views and methods which it now rejects (it has done some of this already), and it will commence the work of evolutionary revolution and democratic education. The gain of the revolution will then be that it enabled Socialists to acquire the political power necessary for the economic transformation of Society. The Government will return and pick up the threads of social organisation where the revolution broke them, and will proceed to carry out a policy of socialisation on precisely the same plan as we should do here if a Socialist Party were in power at Westminster. But then the economic change will not have been brought about by the dictatorship, which will only have policed the revolution and not reconstructed society.

The description of the democratic mass as capitalist, for the reasons I have given, is true;

the conclusion that therefore it can be nothing but capitalist under revolutionary conditions is gratuitous and illogical, and has no relation whatever to the statement which is supposed to prove it. Indeed, the fact is that if democracy under bourgeois influences is bourgeois, under other influences it will be otherwise.

In any event, before turning to details to prove this, I shall end this discussion thus far, by laying down a very sound principle. As we had no belief in the parrot cry that the recent war was being waged to end war, so ought we to have no belief in the doctrine that capitalist methods of repression and force can be used by Socialists to free peoples, and that a rule of tyranny is necessary as a preliminary to a reign of liberty.

III

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

RUSSIA has given an answer to the problems with which I am concerned, and it is a very powerful one. It is an answer of strenuous action, and is therefore attractive; it is in accord with the revolutionary emotions of the time, and is therefore alluring; it has been the object of capitalist conspiracy, and has compelled the Imperialist Governments, masquerading as liberating powers, to unmask themselves, and is therefore commended to the active working-class minds; it has embodied all the theoretical dogmas of the text books, and therefore, whatever unhappy incidents may crowd round it, it

is excused by logic; it has applied the rules of capitalist control to Labour policy, and therefore is welcomed; it produces the general conception of Socialism as its purposes, and therefore is accepted. It has aroused the fears and the enmity of the governing orders all over the world, and yet it has not applied a single principle but what they themselves applied—nor, on the other hand, committed an atrocity but what they themselves have committed or condoned. Only, it has applied these principles from Labour standpoints and committed these "atrocities" in its striving for a Social Democratic Republic. The victims have been unusual; they are of the classes who own newspapers and who command megaphones. Therefore, for once, people are bidden to be shocked at the evils of a class struggle. When the masters murdered the slaves no one troubled; when the slaves murdered the masters the world was shocked. When it was a poor woman who was starved by the rich the world took no notice;

when it was a rich woman who was starved by the poor the world was asked to cry out in indignation. Those of us to whom murder and starvation are always murder and starvation whoever may be the victims are alone entitled to condemn.

The Russian plan was simple, and may be stated in a series of propositions:

I. In a revolution force alone counts. Middle parties disappear, and only Left and Right extremes remain to contest with each other. Power is seized, not granted, and the holders of power pursue but one policy whilst the revolution lasts—to keep themselves in power.

II. This revolution is not one of politics only. It is a social revolution affecting the economic structure of Society.

III. From these two propositions arises the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a necessary method. With a knife the dictatorship prunes mercilessly the dead wood and the parasitic growths of Society and leaves only the

branches which draw sap and contribute to life. This is only a revolutionary act, but the act must be continued until Society has adjusted itself to the Revolution. Then the ordinary processes of democracy come into play.

IV. This dictatorship must take the political form of a class Government. To subject it to the control of a National Assembly is impossible. For the time being, democracy will acquit Capitalism, because it has been fed on Capitalism. The leaders of the working class alone must be responsible for the revolution. Hence the Soviet system is adopted, not necessarily as a permanent form, but as a revolutionary safeguard. In the election of the Soviets no one can vote but the proletariat, because the problem of what is the best test for the franchise must be settled, during a revolution, by disfranchising those classes against whom the revolution is directed.

V. When the enemies of the Russian Revolution doomed the industrial centres of Russia

to starvation, partly by refusing to allow foodstuffs to enter, and partly by prohibiting foreign trade and thus paralysing internal means of transport, the Russian Government was faced with famine, and it decided that the available food should be shared not in accordance with power to buy (so that the rich might have the lion's share), nor on the equalitarian human basis of treating every living being alike (so that the useless classes would have an equal share with the workers), but on the same basis as they had settled the franchise. He who did not work could not eat. The exploiters thus starved first, and the workers (unlike the conditions of Germany, where the Allied blockade starved an undue proportion of the wives and children of the wage-earners) had a better chance of maintaining life. As so many of the Allied peoples say to the starving children of Germany and Austria: "Serves you right; your fathers are responsible for what has happened," so the Russian proletariat makes reply

to the Russian "parasites." Every decent man is horrified, but no honest man can pronounce judgment.

I have stated these propositions as a Russian Bolshevik would, in order that the argument and its suppositions may be clear. Russia was in a working-class revolution, not of a political kind, but of a social and economic kind, and all the incidents, sunny and cloudy, belong to a revolution and not to a peaceful evolution. They will all sink into details, as similar things in the French Revolution have now done, as, for instance, when Lavoisier, under sentence of death, was told that the Revolution had no need of savants. The revolution will not be judged by them; the revolutionary government may be spattered by them as the revolutionary governments of France have been; but the permanent contributions that the revolution is to make to political liberty will depend upon how far they express social and political conceptions that are permanently true.

I only make this comment now, as its significance is overlooked by many Independent Labour Party critics. The Russian Revolution arose from political conditions. It was only when the political State had collapsed that Socialist leadership came in, and, later, that the fabric being built to take the place of that destroyed was of an economic design. Lenin did not begin in a State such as we have here at the present time. Nor did Bela Kun. A time of fundamental political unsettlement ought to be made a time of drastic economic reconstruction, but the unsettlement has not been made either in Russia or in Hungary for the sake of the reconstruction, and there is little evidence that it could have been.

Therefore, in order to understand revolutionary events, we have to discriminate between Russian political conditions and our own—between the politics of a beaten Hungary and that of a victorious Great Britain. The real revolution was the seizure of political power;

the superficial revolution was the attempt to establish Socialism by force. The first is the permanent gain; the second will fail by modification and defeat. Nothing will remain of it except what could have been accomplished by the democratic use of political power.

IV

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

LET us first of all clear away the temporarily revolutionary parts of a statement of the Russian case so that our minds may be concentrated on principles. Revolutionary tribunals, suppression of freedom, classes of food tickets, and the long list of such expedients belong exclusively to revolution, and would in some form appear in every revolution, whatever interest was controlling it. To this class of happening also belongs the execution of politicals, in which Denikin, Koltchak, Mannerheim, and the honoured allies of the Allies have proved them-

selves to be far more expert than the most ruffianly bands who have abused the name of Soviet—commonly without Soviet sanction.* These all being put on one side as having much less connection with Bolshevism as a principle of social reconstruction than American lynching has with the spirit of American society, we can consider the nature of the Bolshevist system in relation to democracy and freedom, and if we discuss the Soviet system we shall have pretty well exhausted the whole contribution.

But as a preliminary to that we must understand the meaning of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," as this doctrine, though essentially belonging to the operations of a revolution, is now held up to us as though it were a necessary part of Socialist evolution. As I

* It is of some importance to note that during the war in this country the shooting of those opposed to the Government was openly advocated, perhaps mainly by blackguards and idiots, but very few militarists thought it particularly reprehensible.

have said, it is a description of the act of seizure of power when the revolution has broken out, when no representative government is possible, when the control of affairs must be in the hands of a body of men who have definite ideas of what the revolution ought to accomplish, and in the chaos of the upheaval are striving to maintain the revolution and bring about a settlement of a special kind—in Russia, the rule of the proletariat. Those who believe that in that transition stage the controlling will which is necessary to bring some order into existence (and a will is necessary, otherwise the revolution is only destructive, and reconstruction is left as the plaything of any class or interest that may happen to emerge from the welter—probably a counter-revolution inspired by the old and temporarily broken order) must exert itself by organised force, a conclusion which no belligerent government can with either moral or intelligent decency dispute, will accept as inevitable for the time being a dictator-

ship of working-class leaders who will forcibly suppress all opposition, whether showing itself by speech or action. This will be temporary and can last only until the revolution begins to settle down, and disrupted Society begins to reorganise itself upon some plan. Such is the inevitable process of a revolution conducted in the old way, and in the same spirit as the Allies sought to exorcise the military madness from Europe. It is "the tyranny to end all tyranny" conceived on precisely the same class of ideas as "the war to end all wars."

The conception is simple and its logic is unassailable once its premises are granted, that force is the best or, indeed, the only means to adopt, and no one is in a position to dispute that except those who have taken the Independent Labour Party view of the war as a political incident. The Bolshevist, in relation to democracy, occupies exactly the same position as those who supported "the holy war" do towards peace. The operations of democracy

are suspended in the interests of democracy, in order to give democracy a new start on better lines. Just as the Great Western Railway directors tore up their rails one night in order to lay a new and better system next morning, so the Bolshevists have established for the time being the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The suppression of newspapers, public meetings, the old Constitutional Assembly, is only the way to a free press, free speech, and a free democracy.

Clara Zetkin is perfectly justified in her conclusion, come to from an assumption prevalent in Europe to-day, that: "I hold that the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, far from involving a sacrifice of democracy, made democracy more effective." Another conclusion of hers explains this in language and thought familiar to the majorities of the European belligerent nations. Referring to the dissolution of the Assembly, to the mass terror and the tyranny, she says: "They must be regarded as

measures of military necessity." And to put the evolutionary nature of the dictatorship as it is regarded by its ablest supporters beyond doubt, I add this quotation from the same writer: "The dictatorship is exercised in the interests of the enormous majority of the population, and it is no more than a means of transition, but it aims at suspending itself, at rendering itself impossible, at realising the ideal of democracy—a free people, in a free land, living by free labour."*

This is the evolution of revolution. Regarding the arguments which knit it into a system of action, the Independent Labour Party has to repeat the political arguments it used during the war—arguments that received the crown

* So also in the memorandum presented by Lenin to the first Congress of the Communist International, the suppression of the freedom of the press was justified to give "effective equality" to the workers. The press under capitalism is a means of exploitation and of "falsifying news and misleading public opinion." Again, with everything Lenin says by way of criti-

of fulfilment almost as they were being uttered. A revolution made in the spirit and with the weapons of the old society cannot be made the occasion of the birth of the new world. That principle guided us well in the war; it must guide us now. Tyranny, like war, breeds its progeny after its own kind.

A minority must control a revolution, and whilst the earthquake is at its maximum representative democracy is impossible. We must then have Committees of Action, not deliberative assemblies. But suppression and force even in a revolution are methods which prolong the powers of the earthquake, which perpetuate the necessity and the existence of the tyranny, as has been seen in the German So-

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cism I agree. In the full sense of the term there is no such thing as liberty of the press. The press, as everyone of its many victims knows, is an instrument used to pervert opinion, the exceptions being very rare. But Lenin's methods of dealing with it cannot be accepted by anyone who believes in the regenerating power of liberty.

cialist Republic, which produce counter-revolutions, which hamper the assimilation of the revolution by Society. The problem facing the leaders of all revolutions is how to drive their ship as quickly as possible across the surging waters of the upheaval, over to the quieter seas beyond, where reason and consultation and acquiescence can come into play. For a "dictatorship of the proletariat" to compel the organs of a counter-revolution to publish articles telling the truth about the revolution is a far wiser and better paying policy than to suppress the pernicious sheets. To keep a firm hand upon conspiracy and an open door to opinion is the wisdom of the revolutionary dictatorship.

I sat one day in Amsterdam with two of the leaders of the German Socialist Majority, detailing the objections I took to their police and military rule in Berlin. Point after point of their policy of repression was reviewed and discussed—meetings, newspapers, organisation. This was quite firmly established in the end,

at any rate in my mind: Repression increases the difficulties which it was begun to meet and it entangles and does not free; repression is a policy which once begun influences the whole of the policy of the government as a drop of dye in a glass of water; repression multiplies the general difficulties which the "dictatorship" has to meet in emerging from the "dictatorship" into the democratic phase of the revolution; repression makes a government lose itself in daily details and obscures general intentions; repression transfers policy from the personalities which alone can maintain a "dictatorship" into the bureaucracies and the machines which work repression, and so the revolution changes from being a movement of ideas to becoming a series of bloody events; repression finally develops into a complete policy of extermination and destroys that of national conversion.

When the "dictatorship" hastening into a democracy is assailed from the outside by foreign armies, its evolution is checked and the

transition period lengthened, with a consequential intensification of the disturbances of that period. The Russian Revolution began with Czardom as its parent and inherited the strife of Czardom—its police and bureaucratic tyranny. But had it not been for the attacks of the Allied Governments the earthquake stage of the Russian Revolution would have been over by now, and the world would have had the advantage of witnessing the assimilation by Russia of the ideas of a Socialist Republic. The only effect so far of this Allied attack upon Russian Socialism has been to prolong the chaotic "dictatorship" stages of the Revolution. It created the Red Terror, it has maintained the revolutionary tribunals, it has been responsible for the executions of politicals. The Recording Angel, who sees more truly than men see, has put down the crimes of the past years in Russia not to the Soviet Government, but to France, Great Britain and America, and on their doorsteps history will lay them.

The Hungarian Revolution, begun on the principles of liberty I have indicated, was passing rapidly from "dictatorship" into democracy, practically free from violence, when the Allies interfered and threw it back into bloodshed. But the most promising of all was the bloodless work of Kurt Eisner, which was ended so tragically, and then Bavaria fell under the sway of those who worship force and feel secure only behind a policeman and a soldier.

Just as the Independent Labour Party made its great contribution in 1914 to the politics of war, so should it now make as distinctive a contribution to the politics of revolution. And the first sentence of that contribution must be a declaration that whilst a revolutionary "dictatorship" is needed to guide a revolution into democracy, the only policy which will do that safely and swiftly is one of political freedom, of moral courage, of vigilant reason. When the policeman and the soldier are called in to

the Downing Streets and the Smolnys of the world, they accept the invitation not to help them, but to dominate them. But if the soldier is not to be used, the preparation before the revolution must be one of political propaganda, which creates the new Society in the bosom of the old as the butterfly grows in the chrysalis. Unless Society is prepared to adopt the new order before the Revolution, there is no guarantee that it will do so after it.

The argument: "We must make a Revolution in order to transform capitalism into Socialism," is false. If the governing and possessing authorities make a revolution by making progressive ideas explosive, as the Czar and his police did in Russia, the architects of a new world must not shirk the responsibilities which that will bring to them, and must not refrain from propagating their ideas because foolish people create revolutions in trying to suppress them; and should a revolution come, the party which is to be most successful in establishing a

Socialist Commonwealth by it is that which is to depend upon freedom rather than force, and which is to array around it the powers of the intelligent democracy rather than trust to the authority of a select and over-awing minority. In other words, to plan a revolution in order to impose a new system on Society is folly or worse; to face a revolution in order to bring the new order to birth is another matter. Even then the revolutionary dictatorship would have to be much more limited than it is in Russia. A dictatorship to maintain the revolution in its critical eruptive stages may be tolerated; but a dictatorship through the period of reconstruction, a dictatorship from which is to issue the decrees upon which the reconstruction of Society is to be based, is absolutely intolerable. No Socialist worth anything would submit to such a thing. It can be maintained only in such diffused communities as Russia; it can be admired only by Socialists at a distance.

V

THE SOVIET FRANCHISE

WHILST a dictatorship is inseparable from a revolution, it should be based upon political, and not upon military, conceptions of the problem of revolutions, and, if this seems impracticable and impossible, one has only to work out in detail the consequences and the consequences of the consequences to an infinity of stages of the first resort to repressive measures at the early stages of revolutions.

That brings me to the political methods of Russia, that is, to the Soviet. The Soviet—a Russian word meaning Council—is the instrument of government by the proletariat, and its

franchise has first to be considered. The Constitution states that "it is impossible during the present decisive struggle to admit exploiters to any organ of government or authority." Thus all parasites and non-producers are disfranchised, all who employ others for profit and those living on unearned incomes, together with members of what are considered to be useless professions, like that of a priest.

Ever since mass voting was considered, the question of tests for political intelligence has been discussed; ever since Government has existed the question as to whether classes exist—e.g., Roman Catholics and Nonconformists—whose allegiance to a power other than the political State, or whose interests, are a danger to the community, has been debated. Property tests, educational tests, religious tests, age standards, and, in our own time, military tests, have been considered, and now the Russian test of being a producer has been applied. This last test, though it comes much nearer to real

social requirements, will not be found to be perfect any more than the others. It seems to anticipate the ideal community in which all shall give service and upon which no one shall live parasitically. A free franchise in such a State would come to the same thing as that which has been imposed by the Soviet system.

Moreover, if we compare the rationale of the Russian franchise with our own, it has no reason to be ashamed of itself. The Conservative party would still disfranchise the mass of the workers (except in so far as it has discovered useful tools in them); our House of Lords is frankly a class organ, with power to alter and veto most of the work of the House of Commons; the special test which our Franchise Law recognises—the educational one—is as great a failure as it could well be, for the representatives sent by Oxford and Cambridge to the House of Commons have been mostly undistinguished and unenlightened, and when they became the one or the other they have

been quickly changed. The Soviet franchise contains no new principle. It proceeds upon old Conservative principles, but applies them in new and unfamiliar ways. It is not the disfranchisement of the poor by the rich, but the disfranchisement of the rich by the wage-earner; and if political intelligence freed from purely personal interest, and an identification of class with communal interest, be the condition of sound representative government, there is far more reason in the Bolshevist Russian method of disfranchisement than in the Conservative British method. A Second Chamber representative of industrial experience and the wage-earning class is a far more intelligent organ of government than one representing the aristocracy of a country, particularly in this industrial age. In a sense they both belong to the same type of representation, but the former belongs to the life of the nation, whilst the latter belongs only to the parasitism of the nation. If we are to have class government, it is better

to have the working class in authority than the non-producing class. The very last people who are in a position to object to the Soviet franchise are, therefore, our own Conservative and Whig parties, because in condemning the Soviet principles they condemn their own.

But the principles of Socialism are not those of the Conservative or Whig parties, so that a *tu quoque* thrown at them does not settle the matter for us.

As a revolutionary measure, for the purpose of consolidating a revolution, and as a means of preserving representative forms during a revolutionary dictatorship, the disfranchisement of the interests assailed by the revolution may be necessary and can be defended. These interests are then at war with the State; the parasite in Russia is in the same relation to his State as the German recently was to ours. Theoretically, this is all quite plain, but when we come to actual practice it is not quite so plain. What are the classes which give service

to the community? Obviously not only the working classes, using the expression to mean the proletariat. But there is something worse than that. Economic and industrial classes have no significance in a revolution. A revolution is a thing of opinion and not of class, and so when repression is applied during a revolution it has to be enforced against movements amongst workers as well as against non-producers as a class. If class divisions were revolutionary divisions no repression would be required, because the revolutionary majority would be so decisive. Or, if we take the view that majorities are inert masses moved by the will of minorities and obedient to minorities, then a class test does not help us, because a disfranchised minority or a habit can still sway these masses. A close examination of what has happened in Russia shows that it is not the disfranchisement of the parasites that has consolidated the Soviet Government, but the external conspiracies of the Allied Governments

and the internal conspiracies of the counter-revolution, together with the exercise of the tyranny of the ruling minorities—for it is absurd to claim that even under the limited Soviet franchise the electors have been quite free. Given the theories of a revolution held by the Bolshevists and the conditions of Russia, freedom of election is out of the question.

Who is to say that the exclusive enfranchisement of the Trade Unionists in this country must yield a Democratic Government such as the enlightened leaders of the Labour Movement would like to see in power building up a Socialist Commonwealth? It might, but it might not, and the Soviet constituencies could not be trusted to criticise such a government on large views of policy but rather on immediate experiences—wages, unemployment, and things far more insignificant like the volume and the quality of the supply of beer, if one may judge from the declared interests of a section of the Trade Union leaders now in Parlia-

ment. Who can deny but that to-day members of Trade Unions supporting the Labour Party vote, in great numbers, against Labour candidates? To characterise that by hard words does not remove it as a fact. Is it not the case that the men most distrusted by those most vociferous in their praise of the Revolution as the only way to Socialism, are members of Trade Unions and Socialist societies? We must not shut our eyes to patent facts in order that we may rush into roads that seem to be short cuts, but which in reality are not short cuts at all but mere by-paths that lead into the wilderness. The Soviet franchise is not really supported as the franchise of a class of producers, but as a basis of power for a school of opinion. In Russia it has secured the authority of an intellectual minority of the minority, all superficial appearances notwithstanding.

The error of the whole conception is only seen when we take our stand firmly on the fact that it is opinion that makes revolutions and

makes them fruitful. The class problem and all that it involves, when it is the subject of political activity, is a problem for the whole of society—that is, a problem of opinion, and divisions of opinion do not correspond to economic divisions of class. This may be obscured in the hot times of revolution when an act of class enfranchisement is made to appear effective, whereas it is not that which is effective at all, but the power of the revolutionary dictatorship.

For normal purposes the theory breaks down hopelessly. It means the disfranchisement of some of the most ardent and the ablest friends of change; it means that the disfranchised classes must have no right to express opinion or to gain influence—for it must go beyond the mere right to vote and proscribe all opportunities to influence others in voting. In a word, it means the complete elimination from society of these classes. Lenin's excuse, quoted above, for suppressing freedom of the press is thus

seen to be ingenuous. That step has been taken because it is involved in the consequences of the Soviet franchise.

The Socialist replies that that is what he wants, and he is right. But I point out to him that he cannot get what he wants by repression, because by repression he cannot select with any accuracy who his victims are to be, and, in addition, he is dealing with an organism, Society, which cannot be altered in its organs in that way. The Socialist method of arriving at that end is to get Society to purify itself.

I must again direct attention to what has really happened in Russia. When Russia was dealing politically with its parasites it was also dealing with them economically. Its food conditions compelled it to hand over the disfranchised sections to starvation; its economic conditions doomed them to complete poverty. Forces which had little to do with political decrees, but which were mainly economic, were destroying these classes by killing them off or

transferring them to the ranks of wage-earners. Therefore, Russia has been saved the trouble of facing many political problems which are the sequels to disfranchisement, because economics were removing the classes from which the problems would have arisen.

I have now come to an end of this enquiry, and what has been found is this. The revolutionary conditions of a Russia made bankrupt, first of all by war, eliminated drastically a class which Socialism without a revolution must eliminate by a readjustment of the relations and powers of the economic classes of capitalism. The franchise in a just Society will be enjoyed only by service givers (an idea of wide meaning because it must include the ailing and the old) because such a Society will be a community of service givers, but that community cannot be created artificially by political disfranchisement. Political justice in this respect follows and does not precede economic justice. We must have Socialism before we

have the Socialist franchise. When we have Socialism we shall have the disfranchisement of parasites because there will be none; we shall not have to undertake the absolutely impossible task of dividing the service-giving sheep from the parasitical goats for the purposes of the franchise. Society will have performed that task for us by economic processes.

VI

SOVIET DEMOCRACY

THE Soviet system has not been sufficiently long at work, or at work under normal conditions, to enable us to see very clearly where the various responsibilities of its governing and administrative functions rest.* But in one important respect the point is clear. It is a pyramid of local governing authorities topped by what is, to all intents and purposes, a national executive; whereas the Parliamentary system is directly based upon national opinion and gives validity to numerous municipal administrative bodies.

Again, the Russian scheme embodies a sound

* cf. Ransome's *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, pp. 82-84.

Socialist idea. Local initiative must be preserved in a free community. But I do not believe that the Russian system for securing this can be permanent. It is the scaffolding of a revolution, not an architectural structure built according to laws of mechanical strain and pressure. The forces of political mechanics are pressing upon it, will make it bulge here and collapse there, will necessitate the erection of struts and buttresses, and before it settles down to an equipoise its features will be altered.

In proof of this I shall apply a test which most Socialists will accept as a good test. What is the power of the people over the Government? I shall not consider temporary revolutionary necessities, but permanent features.

The local Soviet is either to have legislative power or it is not. If it is, there are to be a thousand and one laws on the same subject running in the Russian Commonwealth. If the legislative power of the local Soviets is to be limited, it must be by one of the higher Sov-

iets. In any event there is legislative authority to be exerted—such as fiscal authority—which must be central; and also natural wealth, interlocal services like those of railways and rivers, national policy regarding nationalisation, industrial conditions, international relations must be the subjects of central determination and control.* The central authorities are bound to get more and more power both as co-ordinators and initiators; the All-Russia Soviet will become a Legislature and the People's Commissaries an Executive. I believe that even in Russia this centralising tendency will operate, though that will be much less true in Russia than, say, in France or Great Britain.

* Interesting tales are told, for instance, by Mr. Rickman of how interlocal matters, like the running of railways, are settled by free negotiation; but whilst one envies the delightful simplicity of the people who can wait till this is done, no country in Europe save Russia could do such things, and I suspect that only Russia in the virgin pleasures of the revolution can do them.

The Soviet system is, therefore, one of indirect democracy. The local Soviets are in direct contact with the people, but they are not the sovereign authorities. They do not perform the grand acts of government. In electing them, the people have not to consider the great questions of national, but only the smaller questions of local, affairs. And these questions are to be looked at from a trade union point of view—perhaps only from a workshop point of view—a point of view which is certainly not comprehensive enough for communal action.

When the primary Soviet is elected, it proceeds to elect representatives to higher authorities, so that before we have this system of representatives electing representatives carried on three or four times, we reach a central authority whose representative value is nil, and which has only a very remote contact with the mass of the people. It is, in reality, a dictatorship made permanent.

Is this a system of government of which Socialists can approve? Instead of making the people responsible for policy, it makes the people's representatives and the representatives of the people's representatives rsponsible. I may put the argument for it in this way: The democratic mass can only come to wise decisions on matters directly affecting its own narrow experience. Let the reference to it be concerned only with that experience. The persons who are chosen to do the work of local administration, however, may be assumed to be of such a character and intelligence that they can give good judgments on how, in stage after stage of widening horizons, the smaller interests of the masses can be amplified and coordinated into national and international policy. Thus, by a process of elections by which one elected body chooses the one above it, the judgment of an electorate of increasing intelligence is obtained as the basis for national government, and each higher rank of Soviet has

power to deal with a more complicated set of political relations than the one below it.

Without doubt, as I have shown in a previous chapter, the mass problem is one that threatens to submerge democracy as a form of intelligent government, and one possible way of meeting this is to devise grades of elections which would represent the various strata of political intelligence in the community. I have no belief in the working of any such expedient.

It is a mean conception of democracy, and in the end will result in bureaucracy of a bad kind. If it is impossible to get decisions on the great questions of national importance from the mass of electors, if it is impossible to create the supreme political authority of the nation directly by popular votes, then let us frankly abandon our democratic creeds, for if revised in this respect they must be altered in every respect. We give up the ideal of self-government. As a matter of fact that is what the Bolshevist theory leads to. It is in essence and

spirit a government of the select. The view that a foolish Society can be controlled and coerced is not confined to emperors and military captains.

Then, this conception of elections is purely artificial and, even if apparently working, it would not in reality be working. The mass of the people cannot be separated from national interests. They will be the field of propaganda, agitation, and appeal, and they will destroy the machine which works so cumbrously, and which removes their real rulers beyond the reach of their arms. Only a low state of political interest and intelligence will tolerate this system of government. Were it to obtain here, every Socialist would be at war with it.

The Socialist above all persons is keenly in favour of local life and autonomy. He must accept the risks of centralisation with their companion risks of bureaucracy, and he knows that active local and municipal life is one of

his greatest safeguards, not only of a mechanical kind, but because they are necessary for the production of a good type of citizenship. For that very reason he will oppose with all his strength the turning of these bodies of local administration into electoral colleges for his Parliament or National Executive. If these local bodies are endowed with this power they will be twisted from their proper functions and become the playthings of partisan organisations, and their members will be chosen more for the vote they are to give for the higher Soviet than for the main work they are to do. Local electors either are capable or they are not capable of electing national representatives. If they are, they should do it as a separate act so as to keep election to local bodies free of the responsibility for more national representation; if they are not, a better system should be devised than that which imposes the responsibility upon the representatives of incapables. It is thus not only essential that the

Socialist Parliament should be directly responsible to the Socialist democracy, but that the Socialist administrative bodies should be elected for their own work.

Finally, the system is one which leads to corrupt government. It may be that under Socialism there will be a purity of public life which will defy temptation, but of that I am not so sure, and I am not willing to run the risk of a system which, without any special merits of its own, has, wherever it has been tried —from the old Metropolitan Board of Works to the American Senate and the Legislative Councils of India—made corrupt election easy. The power to elect to important and coveted positions in the State enjoyed by a small handful of men lays them open to all kinds of evil temptation to which they almost invariably must succumb, and from which they should be guarded. The revolutionist is active and pure; his successor is not necessarily the one or the other.

In a sentence, a system of indirect democracy is a form of reaction and not of progress. As a revolutionary necessity it may have to be adopted; as a normal procedure it ought not to be countenanced.

VII

TERRITORIAL *v.* TRADE CONSTITUENCIES

AMONGST other reasons, the Soviet system is commended because it places government on an industrial basis, and because it ends what had begun to be condemned before the Russian Revolution, the geographical basis of parliamentary representation.

As I have already said, the aim of Socialists is to place society on an industrial—e.g., service giving—basis, and when that is done, it follows that government must also be on an industrial basis. In so far as the Russian franchise has become, and is to remain industrial, however,

it is not, as I have already pointed out, by virtue of any decree or franchise law, but by the fact that owing to famine and revolution the parasite has ceased to flourish and almost even to exist. We must be careful not to assign to one cause the results of some other cause.

The geographical area as opposed to the industrial section as a unit of representation raises a different question which Socialists must consider carefully.

The social conflict to-day is between powerfully entrenched Capital and Labour, angered and convinced that it will get nothing, either from governments or from employers, unless it is in a position to enforce its demands. Such a state of things may be very unfortunate, but governments and employers are themselves to blame for it. Revolutionary movements do not spring from agitation, however amply that may have added to their volume. They begin with the stupidities and the tyrannies of the powers and interests which they have ulti-

mately to overthrow. When Labour looks to Parliament as the instrument by which its conflicts with capitalism are to be ended, it discovers that Parliament has neither the knowledge nor the will to perform a task which Labour thinks to be the only one of any importance, and one of the chief reasons for this impotence is that, by its method of election, Parliament is removed from the urgent social pressure by which Labour is surrounded. Labour's grievances before they reach Westminster have lost their urgency and become almost academic. The problems and concerns of the House of Commons are quite different from those which are the daily thoughts of ninety per cent of the people of the country.

How far is this the result of geographical constituencies and electorates based upon citizenship? Certainly not wholly. For the problems and concerns of a national legislature, however it is elected, must not only be wider than those of the great majority of the indi-

viduals who compose the community, whether they be doctors or road-makers, professors or fish-wives, but when it fully appreciates the problems and concerns of its constituencies, being national and international in its outlook and responsibility, it must see those things not in relation to the people in whose experiences they originate, but to the whole community in which they are contained. The miner cannot settle his grievances as though his pit was the nation, because it is not. What he experiences is the result of a system involving a much wider and more complicated relationship than that of mine owner and mine worker, and the remedy devised for what is evil in his experiences influences the whole of the economic and industrial system to which they belong. Therefore, no national and international governing authority can ever regard the problems of individuals and sections in the same simple and direct way in which the persons immediately affected regard them.

Another cause of the remoteness of Parliamentary interests from those of the people is the lack of serious consideration which the electors themselves show at elections. This was shown last December when the concerns of the electorate had nothing to do with their own lives or the life of the nation. People sow tares and then swear because the harvest is not of wheat. Let me come closer to this aspect of the problem. How many Labour selection conferences when selecting candidates consider solely ability to make the House of Commons effective as a Labour instrument?

A Parliament composed of representatives of constituencies of narrow interests—whether of trades or professions *—will be an inefficient Parliament, the characteristic work of which will be patchwork—for instance, raising wages

* Though this is put forward as a new and up-to-date idea, it is not that. It was brought forward as a reactionary alternative to the franchise proposals at the end of the eighteenth century, and is discussed by James Mill in his article on *Government*.

without controlling prices, controlling prices without safeguarding production, giving protection without securing values; whereas those who have a clear conception of what the governing authority in an industrial community should be, must seek to create a Parliament which will act constructively for the whole community. Society is greater than any industry; every industry exists only in relation to every other industry; the complete economic unity must always be considered.

If we start from this conception, which is the only one which Socialists recognise, certain things follow.

(1) A national and international governing authority cannot be constructed on a sectional or trade idea, cannot be a mere coming together of guilds or unions of engineers, miners, railwaymen, dockers; it must be of these, but at the same time beyond these. Labour in politics is different from Labour in the workshop, because the nation is not an accumulation of a

set of separate workshops or trades, but these organised into an economic and social unity.*

(2) Mere trade representatives are, therefore, not fully equipped Members of Parliament, and a Parliament elected from trades would not be a good Parliament.

(3) The territorial area—and that means, in effect, the constituency based on the idea of citizenship as opposed to one based on the idea of trade or profession—is, therefore, not to be discarded in the election of a national governing authority.

At the same time, the faults of our present system are obvious.

(1) Parliament, though elected by citizens, is drawn in its personnel far too exclusively from one class of interest, one tradition and

* According to a competent investigator with strong leanings to the Left, Miss Eastman, Bela Kun had to abandon the idea of representation by workshop or industry and declare for a "basis of geographical representation."—*Liberator*, August, 1919, quoted in the *Forward*, August 23, 1919.

experience, and one section of the community. Though in form and theory democratic, in reality it is not so. It is moved by class interests and class assumptions just as much as if it were elected by a stockbrokers' guild, a guild of city merchants, a guild of landowners, a guild of lawyers.

(2) The actual working of the territorial system of constituencies does lend itself to the dominance of rich men and party machines, and does tend to make election issues unreal and unsubstantial, emotional and superficial, and at elections to blow off the stage those matters of vital living importance to the common toiler who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. Holiday politics too frequently, and in the nature of the case, decide elections, and the electors resume, after the election, the struggle with adversity which they could have minimised by wise voting, but which was not in their minds when they filled up their ballot papers.

(3) A reform in the governing machine is urgently needed by which the industrial life of the country may be brought into more direct and certain contact with its political life.

The argument I have been considering is also put in another form. It is said that a Parliament, elected as our House of Commons is, must take the consumers' interests too exclusively into account and must sacrifice the interests of the producers. Such a Parliament must always keep the working of the economic machine before it. If, for instance, it settles a strike, it does so because a strike is a great inconvenience to Society as a going concern, not because it is determined to do justice to the strikers.

This seems to me to be altogether inconclusive and to overlook important facts. A capitalist Parliament will do this, not because it thinks of the consumer, but because it can only think in terms of capitalist convenience. But no one who has had experience of the La-

bour Party in Parliament can believe that all Parliaments must function in this way. The Labour Party thinks of the producer first of all, and it asks the Government to interfere in disputes not merely to settle them, but to settle them equitably. The argument amounts to this: that from our experience of capitalist Parliaments a deduction is made regarding the nature of all Parliaments.

The hard and fast distinction between producers and consumers is purely academic when used in this way. Every day in his life the individual has to create a unity between his interests as a producer and a consumer, and that unity not only must, but easily can, be reflected in the policy of his national governing authority. If, however, the disunity is real and cannot be dissolved by any representative assembly, the expedients proposed to meet the difficulty do not do so. For, according to the argument, an assembly of producers can only consider the interests of producers and not the

interests of Society, and if there were two Parliaments—a producers' one and a consumers' one—the dilemma would still be there because no joint authority could synchronise both.

For Socialists the task is, therefore, not the destruction of the territorial and citizen constituency, but its supplementing by industrial constituencies. Our constitution points to a simple way by which this can be done. A Second Chamber limited in its political powers is one of our inheritances which seems to be difficult to throw off, but at present its membership is confined to a class which cannot represent the nation. If a system of election based upon citizenship—either by some special method of election like Proportional Representation or larger constituencies—were to be adopted for this Second Chamber, the danger to free democratic government would be great. Its demands for power equal to that of the other Chamber could not with reason be re-

sisted; it would be a source of delay and deadlock which would bring representative institutions into further contempt; it would give rise to unsettlement and remove from the country that confidence in Parliament which is so necessary for peaceful evolutionary progress. A nominated Second Chamber, though from the point of view of practical politics the most convenient form of such a body, is so contrary to democratic assumptions that it will not be adopted.

Let us, then, have a Second Chamber on a Soviet franchise. The same people might vote for both Chambers, but their frames of mind would be so different that they would be different electorates. Guilds or unions, professions and trades, classes and sections, could elect to the Second Chamber their representatives, just as the Scottish peers now do. It would enjoy the power of free and authoritative debate (no mean power); it could initiate legislation, and it could amend the bills of the

other Chamber; it could conduct its own enquiries, and be represented on Government and Parliamentary Commissions and Committees. If in such a body Labour were adequately represented, and there were a strong Labour Party in the other body, the real needs and concerns of the nation would not be overlooked, but would be felt by the two Houses with a directness which we have not known hitherto in our political life. The House of Lords must be reconstituted; the Parliament Act provides for that. Within a very short time the attention of Parliament must be turned to this subject. The Labour Party ought at once to begin constructing a scheme by which, whilst preserving citizenship as the basis of democratic representation, the direct representation of industrial interests may be provided for and a place found for representatives who in their thoughts, work and interests will be completely free of the trammels of party discipline, and to whom political prob-

lems will appear in a colour and with a simplicity which they cannot assume to those immersed in the more complicated affairs of the national and international State.

VIII

PARLIAMENT

To the man who responds day by day to the call of the factory whistle, Parliament too often appears to be an ineffective thing. And when the man is intelligent and is actively interested in his own affairs, the ineffectiveness is so great that he ceases to believe in Parliament altogether, pronounces a plague upon all political parties and leaders, and lets the world drift so far as political action is concerned. As a rule, such a man becomes a believer in what is called "Direct Action," or becomes a supporter of the charitable patronage of Tory democracy and a backer of those pol-

iticians of social manners who understand his weakness and who pander to them. He becomes *blasé*. When one applies a microscope to them one sees alarming likenesses between the mental make-up of the chattering Cockney who votes for a scoundrel of fair words and "understanding," and the revolutionary of set narrow ideas who in times of peace proclaims a 1792 September.

Before we condemn Parliament and political action we must put it in the dock, and pronounce sentence upon it after a patient examination of its faults; and that is what I propose to do in this chapter, with a brevity consistent with the plan of this book.

Parliament itself is a machine of government, and it has been worked hitherto by one section of the community. Labour has voted, but has not run the machine. Whatever the change in electorate may have been, the "governing classes" have up to now remained pretty much the same. They have had to keep

their eye upon the majorities they had to secure, but as they came to understand them, they found that these majorities were moved by no definite idea and sought no definite goal. They lived from hand to mouth. They could be stirred into passion by things which were trival, they could be easily deceived, they were fond of dramatic representations and were very credulous, mental habits and the world as they found it held them in bondage, they were absolutely tame, very obedient, and very suspicious of new leaders and willing to believe anything against them. The danger of thinking things out, of reflecting upon statements so as to come to independent conclusions, did not exist. The masses accepted both statements and conclusions ready-made for them, and did not seem to be able to reason as to whether the one and the other hung together or did not. They saw them both in front of them, and they accepted them for reality just as they did a stone on their path. The "govern-

ing classes" have striven to keep things so. They have discovered that the effect of popular education was not to make people intellectually vigorous, but to make them slaves of what they read, and that the effect of having the vote was not to make them consider what they would do with it, but to make them enjoy an election. So the democratic reforms of the past century have been largely changes in forms—like an extended franchise—necessary undoubtedly, but, in the nature of things, the power given could be abused, used, or played with. Thus, surrounded by democratic reforms, the "governing classes" have maintained their authority and have used democracy to maintain it.

Therefore, at the very outset, in expressing disappointment with the results of Parliamentary government, we must begin by admitting that the first point to be made against it belongs not to itself, but to the masses. They have not been intelligent enough to use

it. Now, nothing can take the place of intelligence. We can have a revolution by force, we can have a temporary dictatorship of the intelligent democracy, but continued progress must before long come back to its source in the minds of the masses. We can substitute new forms of government for present ones, but unless the people become "the governing classes" in fact as well as in name, the rotten foundation will show itself by cracks in the superstructure. Furthermore, we can by an interesting academic analysis show how complicated is modern Society, how difficult it is to create one sovereign authority in the State effectively claiming both a political and an economic allegiance, but none of that, nor all of it put together, helps us to get away from the difficulty which the absence of wisdom in the use of power creates. Where there is no intelligence there will be no unity. Where there is no comprehension of unity and no conception of how political action can secure it,

a mere change of systems of government is like a change in style of architecture without discarding the rotten bricks which made the previous building uninhabitable. Socialists, revolutionary or evolutionary, can never get away from this. It dogs them like shadows; it dooms all their efferts and schemes to futility until they change it. If the people do not understand Parliament, better government is not secured by splitting up its functions. If the people cannot construct Socialism in their minds they cannot build it into their institutions.

A mere class consciousness will not guard the nation against this shortcoming, because, however useful it may be to imbue the workers with a sense of their class importance and of their present class subordination, and however clear one may make the facts of the existing class struggle, the political value of this is slight. The shortcoming is intellectual and moral. The self-respect and independence

which are to make the workers into a great political power cannot be produced from such thoughts as that, say, "Local veto maintains the private cellars of the rich whilst it closes the pubs of the poor." Too much Socialist propaganda has been upon these unsubstantial lines, and the failure of that kind of propaganda was shown when the war came and proved that the most accomplished talkers of brave words were the most ill-prepared for playing their part in the struggle, accepted the most empty of titles, performed with a sense of gratitude and honour the most menial of jobs, and fulfilled with an exemplary faithfulness missions hostile to Labour.

This came at the end of a period of peaceful development when every one of us in Parliament had incurred the suspicion of opportunism, and when it was true that certain working-class leaders were losing their class minds and becoming petty bourgeoisie. What happened soon after the outbreak of war

seemed to many to be the natural evolution of this opportunism and of the bourgeois spirit, and political action suffered in reputation accordingly.

This opens up another aspect of the problem: the Labour Party in the House of Commons. The "governing class" is educated for its business. It comes into public life trained in the habits of team action. One has only to hear the Tory Party cheer in the House of Commons to know its strength as a dominating party. It has the same unity of spirit as a pack of hounds after a fox. It likes the game. The privileges it has enjoyed for many generations have enabled it to acquire the habits which secure the enjoyment. In Parliament, as in its mansions, it is at home. The newcomers are strangers. They have had no practice in the game. They are rent and weakened by hesitancy and jealousy, and they cannot keep these vices in subjection as our ruling classes do. The political education of the

workers must not, therefore, be confined to the education of electors, but must extend to that of representatives. The Parliamentary machine must not only be worked with knowledge, but with spirit. These powers are not automatically acquired by people when they are elected, but come by practice. Only when a class feels that it is triumphing can it produce a party with a triumphing spirit. The personality of members helps, of course, and I doubt if the Labour Party has yet discovered the best way of selecting candidates. Until selection conferences are wise enough to search for certain qualities rather than accept men of a certain status in local bodies or in organisations whose method of work and training are not those of the House of Commons, the governing machinery will not be captured from the inside.

This fault in Parliament is again not of Parliament, but of Labour outside. If it were properly met it would go a long way to satisfy

in a permanent way all that more revolutionary methods—like the domination of the minority —are supposed to satisfy in a temporary way. For the mass is always dominated by a minority—a minority of force, a minority of reason, a minority of the accepted order. A minority of force can appear to do things during a revolution, but it creates a counter-revolution which is serious in proportion to the thoroughness with which the minority proposes to do its work, and if it is to make permanent contributions to progress, it must quickly find sanction in popular support. Though a minority of political intelligence making its voice heard and its will felt through efficient representatives may for a time appear to be proceeding at a tortoise pace, compared with a revolutionary minority of dictators, it will pass the fitful energies of the hare, get to the far goal first, and make itself secure in the possession of its gains.

The Parliamentary method must always de-

pend for its success on average, not on special, intelligence or energy. It provokes the specially keen people by its cumbersomeness, but it deals with Society and the community, and not with enlightened coteries or associations. Not what a Socialist meeting declares itself anxious to do, but what the community is prepared to do, is the opportunity which the politician has. Parliament deals with the organic change of Society, not with satisfying the wisdom of individual minds. A Socialist branch is a totally different thing from the community in which it exists. Were it not so, it would not be a Socialist branch. But our friends are apt to forget this sometimes in criticising Parliamentary methods. And nothing will ever change that. A revolution only masks it. Nothing will ever relieve the Socialist of the burden of making Socialists, or of persuading the community that his views of affairs are right.

If any scheme of government could be de-

vised to avoid these encumbrances which beset Parliaments I would support it. I have not seen it, however. The encumbrances must just be removed. Short cuts and revolutionary jumps may be possible once in a century, but when these conditions arise the most advantage can be taken of them only when the masses are prepared to allow it, when the politician leads the attack through Parliament in co-operation with the other forces available, and when the counter-revolution can be repelled not by arms and barricades, but by reason and the settled convictions of the people.

In other words, Parliament being the will of the people embodied in an institution, Socialists must work to get the right will and an intelligent will, and to provide the most intimate touch between the two. They are handling a problem of the mass mind, and no trick or kick will enable them to avoid that problem. When a child gets impatient with work which it is doing badly, or of which it has got tired, it

smashes it to smithereens and feels relieved, but that does not enable it to accomplish what it set out to do. A policy of such relief is specially bad in public affairs. The gates of heaven are not to be taken by force, nor are the foundations of a new world to be laid in that way. I know that all the emotions of to-day are impatient with such views. Revolution and the mind of revolution are the progeny of all wars. The reaction would shoot us for safety; some of us would shoot the reaction for righteousness. The tidal waves which follow the earthquake are swishing and swilling everywhere. But we must not launch our galleons, built to carry us on high adventure and exploration, on a tidal wave.

Therefore, instead of harbouring designs to destroy representative government or to construct it on some basis other than democratic, Socialists should consider how to perfect the system. I have already made a suggestion how to improve the Second Chamber, on the as-

sumption that it is to exist, but the House of Commons itself needs to be reformed, and I give in an appendix some proposals, worked out in detail, for making Parliamentary machinery more efficient.

As a method of increasing Parliamentary efficiency I put more and more value upon devolution. The case for an Irish Parliament is complete. The matter does not end there, however. The overwhelming influence of England on Scottish and Welsh affairs is destroying the native political instincts of these nations. It is a profound calamity that our "predominant partner" possesses political instincts and educational equipment of a much lower order than those of the two nations joined to it. Their capabilities are thus lost, are slowly being crushed out and stifled, and the Imperial Parliament comes nearer to the political intelligence of Sussex and Surrey, Rutland and Kent, than to the constituencies of the smaller nationalities where people are accustomed to

think independently and where political affairs are followed with keen intelligence. Moreover, Parliamentary action is deprived of the support which would be given to it by the vigorous examples of legislation and administration which would come from beyond the Tweed and Severn.

The real weakness of the House of Commons, however, comes from the way in which it is elected. So long as enormous sums of money can be legally spent in elections, so long as Members of Parliament are regarded as dispensers of charity in their constituencies, the men who in singleness of interest and purpose wish to serve the community will be severely handicapped. Further legislation can deal with this. And yet, I am anxious that there should be no doubt left as to the real evil. There are men in the House of Commons today who cannot be legally disqualified from sitting, but whose connection with any constituency is disgraceful to that constituency.

They have been elected, however. Until the political education of the constituencies is better, we have to console ourselves with the hard truth that is in the saying: You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

England itself is, however, composite and great gulfs separate district from district. The North-East Coast, to take but one example, is poles asunder from the Home Counties, and though they share a common citizenship, the use they would make of it is very different. I know that these differences cannot be pushed too far, but they have to be recognised more than they have been. I know that Yorkshire cannot have a tariff of its own, or Durham mining legislation all to itself as the reward of its intelligence; but there are many powers which Yorkshire and Durham could exercise without interference from Whitehall, and if greater districts than counties arranged in natural groups determined by old historical differences and more modern economic ones were

created with powers that made their Councils really important, new life and reality would be infused into politics. The remoteness of the Imperial Parliament from the life of the people is the result of the State being too complicated for political precision. When we were ruled by landlords and then by capitalists, the State was simply the interest of the landed autocracy and the commercial plutocracy. It never could get too complicated. But so soon as it became a democracy, every variety in locality, every remaining trace of racial difference, every special feature of industrial difference, every variation in the tone of public opinion and the robustness of the minds of the people came into play, and in the large orchestra at Westminster they did not balance and did not harmonise. Politics lost touch with life. Pledges given to constituencies could not be fulfilled. The representative assembly could not be moved to interest itself in the things which interested great groups of people; elec-

tions therefore were not the occasion for a serious survey of politics and the issue of mandates upon which representatives could work for a term of office, were but the occasion for partisan orgies. The more ineffective Parliament is, the stronger partisanship becomes; the stronger partisanship is, the more mediocre become candidates. Thus, Parliament dies like a plant without soil in an uninvigorating atmosphere.

The sub-division of power that is required is not a vertical one on the lines of trades, for that will make things worse and make Parliament more useless and inefficient, but one which will strengthen local autonomy, bring politics back into touch with life, make the representative system representative on matters in which groups of people take an interest, encourage the national, racial, and district characteristics to develop themselves in harmony with each other, promote unity not by uniformity but by the co-operation of unlikes, and by enlivening

the interests of the people in the affairs in which they immediately live, give them a capacity to come to sound judgment on their more remote and general concerns. The problem we have to solve is how to restore reality to politics, how to make Parliament as real to the people as it was to the landlords when it was enabling them to enclose commons and keep up rents, and as it was to the capitalists when it gave them Free Trade and Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform. One way is to make it a trade committee, but therein lies smallness, narrowness, sectionalism, which will in the end bring democracy to wreck. The other way is that which I suggest, which, by beginning with the home and the district, will awaken and instruct the interests upon which the power of governing democracy must be founded.

IX

"DIRECT ACTION"

We must not, in sticking to our belief in political action, fall into the error of assuming that the Parliamentary aspect of that action is its sole aspect, and of regarding any particular Parliament and every Parliamentary decision as something that has to be accepted without popular protest. That is to go back to Hobbes, in whose time the rise of the Parliamentary Party appeared to break up national unity and introduce confusion into national sovereignty. Hobbes could see safety and peace only in a government with powers assigned to it after the manner of this decla-

ration: "I authorise and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner." This contract, which was the basis of Hobbes' Leviathan State, is supposed by some people to be the basis of the modern democratic State governed by Parliaments.

The Parliamentary Party was victorious, and the confusion which Hobbes thought ought to follow did not follow. A sovereign authority of one will which no power could successfully challenge was found not to be necessary for government. Since then we have had Parliamentary sovereignty based upon the will of the electors, rather than personal sovereignty based upon the will of a monarch. Parliamentary sovereignty was a step towards liberty. But now we have by experience found that Parliament can be manipulated, that election issues can be fraudulent, that executives can

use Parliament for purposes that are not in accord with the will of the people, that Cabinets can coerce Parliament, and that the further removed from the electors the governing power is the more self-willed becomes that power. So we have a movement intended to impose limitations upon the absoluteness of Parliamentary sovereignty by bringing the "direct action" of the people into play, just as the representative action of Parliament was to be brought into play to limit monarchic sovereignty. The intention is not to take sovereignty from Parliament, but to limit its liberty to abuse its sovereignty; it is to convert the masses from an attitude of passivity between elections to one of activity when that is necessary. There is nothing "unconstitutional" in this—nothing that does violence to any intelligent conception of Parliamentary government. Rather, to keep public opinion active during the life of a Parliament is to complete the theory of government upon which Parliament

as an institution rests, and to give life to the representative system.

Another section of Parliamentary critics cut deeper than that, however. Their position is something as follows: The sovereign State cannot, in the nature of things, control the whole of man's actions, or cover the whole of his life. At one time an attempt was made to make religion a matter of State concern, and religious conformity was regarded as essential to State unity. No bishop, no king; no king, no State! That has gone. Now, a new set of obligations has grown up which further subdivides political sovereignty. The industrial State has become distinct from the political State. The individual as a workman is a member of a State apart from the State of which he is a member as a citizen. I have already dealt with this argument in another connection, and little is required to supplement what I have written. The political State cannot be divided from the industrial State. It was not so under Capital-

ism, it cannot be so under Socialism. When the time comes, as it now has, for Labour to enter into final political conflict with the economic system of Capitalism, the two aspects of the State come into conflict with each other, because the Government of Labour—that is its Parliament—is fundamentally antagonistic to the Government of Capitalism. But it is not only Labour as producer, but Labour as citizen, that is in opposition to the capitalistic State, and those who, making academic distinctions between the two aspects of Labour's experience and activity in the State, wish to divide them in the organisation of the State, so far from being progressive, are really reactionary, and are weakening Labour's strength and dividing Labour's government.

The line to be drawn between obedience to the Government and individual sense of right and wrong is indefinite, is historical and not metaphysical, and cannot be fixed by principle arising out of the nature of government and

the nature of man. The conflict between the two never raises a simple but always a complicated problem in which circumstance is an important element. For instance, the spread of Christianity undoubtedly contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire, the reason being that the foundations of that Empire were bad. At the time, the rulers of the Empire, who took the same standpoint as our own Bishops and Archbishops have recently taken regarding Conscientious Objectors, were justified in persecuting Christians. They put political obligation, which they understood, before moral obligation, which they did not understand. To this extent Diocletian, Julian, and the Bishops stand on precisely the same position. But such an opposition is not in the nature of government, but in the lack of human wisdom. A man of insight could have seen that the Christian political ethic was more powerful than the Imperial political ethic, and that the Empire could not last. So a man of in-

sight ought to see to-day that the conflict between the capitalist State and the Labour State is a conflict between a weak ethic and a strong one, between something which has fulfilled its purpose and something destined to take its place. In that conflict the inadequacy of the old to satisfy the needs of the new must be worked out in detail, and so it comes to be pointed out that the capitalist political State cannot satisfy the requirements of the Labour State in its economic aspects. But from that it is not legitimate to argue that the Labour political State cannot satisfy its own economic requirements. All that is necessary is that we must recognise the industrial aspects of the Labour State. We must be aware of the interests and the aspects of Labour experience which compose the unity of government which we seek. We must be sure that they are things that can be united, and not make the mistake of the ecclesiastical politicians and the political ecclesiastics. Then we must erect the po-

litical machinery which will embody the unity.

This argument must be emphasised and stated from many points of view. The essential fact that must be grasped, however, is this. Industrial organisation must not be a government independent of the political government. It must not be an outside check or menace. It must be part of the working system. That is a translation into constitutional theories of the policy of the Independent Labour Party when it worked for a Labour Party composed of Trade Unions and Socialist Societies. With some of the statements of those who oppose "Direct Action" to-day, I am in profound disagreement, and it is necessary that I should make that quite clear. They are false in their conception of democracy and feeble in their conception of Parliament. They belong to ideas of political servitude which are antiquated and reactionary; they are nothing but the evidence of the blight of political respectability upon the democratic spirit. If we ap-

pear to agree on conclusions, we disagree upon reasons. I reject the argument that direct action is "unconstitutional"—whatever that may mean; I deny that it is illegitimate; I do not believe that it is inconsistent with democratic Parliamentary government; I offer no hospitality to the views of a Leviathan State whether based upon the will of a monarch or that of a Parliamentary majority.

"Direct action," if it be regarded as the beginning of a further division of the democratic political State, does not seem to me to be in accordance with Socialist conceptions. Regarded as one of the activities of the industrial democracy engaged in controlling the actions of a capitalist State, it must be accepted as a legitimate form of activity, and discussion regarding its value must be proceeded with.* It

* I cannot resist the temptation of reminding my readers that when "direct action" was taken during the war in the interests of capitalism, no protest was uttered but it was welcomed, applauded, and paid for

is thus a problem in practicality, not one in legitimacy.

The question is, Who is to decide the necessity for action? That depends on the circumstances of the case. Such action must always be very rare, because the demand for it can only arise when governors have created revolutionary conditions by their stupidities or oppressions; freedom prevents its being used for trivial grievances and forbids its becoming a regular feature of democratic activity. The problem which this raises is approached by two different types of mind. The one is always looking for paper or mechanical safeguards; the other, knowing that there never can be such safeguards, looks to those which liberty, enjoyed under democratic conditions, always af-

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by capitalist organs and aristocratic subscribers. Should ever a Labour Revolutionary Tribunal be set up in this country, these people will be sentenced by laws made by themselves—though they were meant to apply to other people!

fords. Whoever dreams of "direct action" as a corrective to the abuse of Parliamentary power or a menace to a Government, must know quite well that that action can only arise in a state of strong popular indignation, when the behaviour of those in power is such that the ordinary political mind of the people is upset, and that confidence in Parliament is forfeited —when, in fact, Governments have created revolutionary conditions. Therefore, the only conditions under which an agitation for "direct action" to secure political ends can ever become a serious thing are themselves a safeguard against the habitual use, which would be the abuse, of the weapon. An attempt at "direct action" under any other circumstances would fail so signally that it could not amount to social inconvenience, and it would prevent any similar attempt being made for long years to come.

This also explains why the argument that "direct action" is inconsistent with Parliamen-

tary government is baseless, because such action can never come into operation whilst Parliamentary government is fulfilling its functions as representative government: it can only be used to support representative government.

These points of explanation being cleared, I must consider others relating to "direct action" itself.

The word unfortunately is used in a very confused way to indicate a strike either for political or industrial ends, and the confusion lies over much of present-day thinking regarding the actions of workmen as wage-earners and as citizens—regarding the relations between trade union and political action. "Direct action" for political purposes—say, the ending of a Government—would be taken by trade unions declaring a strike in exactly the same way as though the purpose to be gained was industrial —say, an increase of wages. As a matter of fact, the nature of the action in the two cases, respectively, is quite distinct and different.

When it declares a strike for industrial purposes a union joins issue with its declared enemy, the capitalist. The object it places before it is specific—say, an extra penny an hour—and whether the strike is long or short it does not vary. The battleground and the armies are also well defined. It is strictly what it is generally called—a trade dispute.

Not so when it is a political strike. The workmen, using trade union machinery, join issue with the Government. The object which is to be attained, though it may be nominally definite—say, the overthrow of a Government—involves so many issues, and is in itself so very complicated, that it very quickly becomes an all-round political controversy, raising every problem relating to legitimate democratic action, and in these consequential issues the simple original one becomes obscured. Nor are the armies well defined, because, on the one hand, the action is such as to paralyse Society—for political "direct action" means that all

the important unions must be in it—and therefore, not only will it be more difficult to keep discipline in the attacking army of Labour, but also to prevent the Government attacked from getting reinforcements from Society as a whole; then both armies and issues will be completely changed, and what was a strike for an apparently definite and comparatively small change in reality becomes a revolution. Another consideration which shows the difference between the two forms is this. Any trade union can fight an industrial battle successfully, but only certain unions can fight a political one. Tailors cannot; only unions that can paralyse State functions, like transport workers and miners, can. Further, the ballot, which legitimises a trade dispute, is rightly a ballot of the members of the union concerned, whereas the ballot that legitimises a political strike should be taken in a much wider constituency. Regarded in its industrial aspect, a general strike may be a Trade Union Congress affair;

regarded in its political aspect, it is a Labour Party affair.

This is the first practical consideration which must be taken into account. It means that issues have to be carefully studied, not only as they are at a given moment, but as they are sure to develop. Some issues are much more easily fought than others. "Direct action" to secure "Hands off Russia" and end conscription is, for instance, far more practicable than "direct action" to overthrow a Government, because as regards the former it can be directed in two ways, neither of which can expand into unforeseen situations. In the first place there is the general strike for a limited period. This is a drastic form of demonstration which shows the red light to Governments. Then, in the next place, there is a refusal to handle material sent to support the obnoxious military dictators, like the strike of the Italian dockers at Genoa.

The confusion between workshop and State

issues which I have been discussing has been seriously encouraged by war conditions. The Government has been an employer on an extensive scale; it has had to interfere in a way it has not done hitherto with labour troubles, and whilst doing this it has been defied, browbeaten, laughed at. Its Munitions Act has been torn in shreds and proclamations under it treated as waste paper. From beginning to end it has cut a sorry figure. Thus it has come about that "direct action," which virtually was a workshop affair, being taken against the Government, appeared to be a political affair, and its complete success, not only in gaining its ends but in humiliating and making a fool of the Government, was an encouragement to workmen to assume that for purely political ends the same method would be effective. This is a mistake, however. In building up a policy for "direct action" we must vigilantly guard ourselves against the fallacy of assuming that

the experiences during the war are to be relied upon under peace conditions.

The difficulties in the way of making political "direct action" successful must always be an offset to the theoretical justification for its use. The objection to "direct action" is its practical difficulties, not its constitutional or political impropriety, which does not exist. Should circumstances arise when active political sections in the community are convinced that Parliamentary powers are being abused and that in the interest of representative government the abuse must be ended, if public opinion will give sufficient support and the object to be aimed at is of such a nature as to allow the weapon to be used effectively, which in most cases means swiftly, the case for "direct action" is complete.

In such circumstances, however, whilst trade union machinery may be used, it is not merely trade union ends that are being served, and

the action cannot be regarded as an ordinary industrial strike. In the months after a war, and under conditions such as exist to-day, when the workers find themselves betrayed on every hand, and when every wind that blows brings with it the intoxicating fumes of revolution, their trade union organisation will be naturally used to express their feelings. It alone can procure a mass movement, and it will be used because nothing else can be used. This again, however, only shows the exceptional nature of the case. It comes to this. The masses are driven into a corner. All means of influencing the Government are denied to them. They know that they are lied to and cheated. They fall back upon simple and drastic action for which they themselves are responsible and which they themselves carry through, and in doing this they use the only machinery for combined action which they have been able to create—their trade unions. Life bursts red tape, and "correctness" has to be set aside.

Labour needs a weapon of offence and defence, and the union is the only one available.

When these things happen, however, Labour must guard itself against a great danger. When the industrial mind is angry, sectional movements are apt to be taken, and the discipline of united action is disregarded. There is a riot here and a strike there; the public are alienated by small inconveniences and by disconnected struggles which do not embody large issues, but which are taken upon apparently small grievances. Whilst on occasion these may be the preludes of a revolutionary movement, they are far more commonly the dissipation of the revolutionary spirit. They throw back the general movement; they rouse antagonism amongst those who would be favourable; they discourage the mass. Sectional outbursts are the foes of all-round advance, and much of the spirit of "direct action" to-day issues in sectionalism. This is in consequence of the way in which the idea of force has been

associated with the change, and the pose of "rebel" has been joined with the programme of social transformation.

I have considered "direct action" in relation to these troubled times when revolutionary conditions are everywhere, but I must consider it under more normal conditions as well. For Socialists have to meet the claim that industrial action for purposes of working-class emancipation is more effective than Parliamentary action, the attempt being to compel Socialists to take their stand on one side or the other. On neither *side* should Socialists be found, because there are no sides on the matter. If Socialists could only get a firm hold on their position they would have no difficulty in withstanding this attack.

To the Socialist the relative merits of industrial and political action must be considered, not for the purpose of abandoning the one or the other, but of assigning to each its

proper place on a full attack all along the line by democracy upon capitalism.

All affairs directly dealing with workshop conditions, and which are not general to the community like a national minimum wage, can best be dealt with by "direct action" if unions are strong; but national industry levels, like the old demand for an eight hours' day, can best be dealt with by political action, though even in that case "direct action" on the part of specially strong unions may be essential to spur on and convert Parliament. Tyrannical and similar conduct on the part of the possessing classes which does not come within the scope of legislation, like the victimisation of workpeople or the refusal of the Albert Hall authorities to let the hall for a Labour demonstration, can best be dealt with by "direct action." Whether swift results are required and "direct action" can secure them, it is the proper means to adopt. Where Parliament in dealing with Labour interests shows an unwilling-

ness to act or a hostility, as when the miners were asking for the Coal Commission, "direct action," or a threat of it, is necessary. But in all these cases it must be noted that Parliament either does not come in at all, or, when it does, it is a reactionary Parliament, acting in the interests of the capitalists. In the latter case, "direct action" does not supplant political action, but only contends against bad political action. It *is* political action in a form which has become necessary because the Parliament is bad, but which would not be necessary if the Parliament was good. It is Labour acting as massed wage-earners correcting the mistakes it made when it acted as massed citizens, and I, believing in economising both time and energy, prefer that Labour should not have made a mistake in the first instance.* In any

* There is a kind of "direct action" which is very enticing and which if used within strict limits is very effective. Where a body of men, by using the powers they have as workmen of a special kind, can in-

event, I cannot conceive of a Socialist believing that he has at last found the most effective way to his goal when he has discovered how to undo some of the evil designs of a Parliament in the election of which he has either taken no concern or failed to get such good results as he desired. Get the proper Parliament, and political "direct action" is unnecessary for Labour; get the most successful "direct action," and its results have still to become the subject of Parliamentary handling, as the miners are now finding out. The advocates of "direct action" as a substitute for political action always begin their examination of events too late in the process and finish it too soon. They do not go through

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fluence political acts, they are tempted to do so. The conduct of the electric workers at the Albert Hall and that of the seamen in refusing to sail with certain passengers during the war, are cases in point. If the printers had refused to set up in newspapers what they knew to be misrepresentations of fact and malicious attacks upon Labour, that would have been another case in point. The danger is that the limits

the whole process of the series of events in which the "direct action" is but an incident. This is well illustrated in the way that the Russian position presents itself to many minds.

We must begin with Czardom and its political system, and go on to Kerensky and the policy imposed upon him by his connection with the Allies. The first issued in the second, and both gave birth to Bolshevism, which did not arise as an independent movement of thought, but came as an historical product of Czarism and Kerenskyism (as is seen by a study of Lenin's speeches as the critic of Kerensky). When power came to Lenin, it was political

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within which that power can be properly exercised are so easily overstepped. The electric workers may be tempted to prevent an obnoxious meeting as well as to secure the holding of a welcome one; the seamen's action was known to have been prompted by false representations and their leaders by other inducements; the printers might constitute themselves press censors. So we had better fall back upon the rule that in all matters of opinion, liberty; and that action such as I am considering should, as in the Albert Hall case, be confined to securing liberty.

first, and his economic programme was carried out not by "direct action," but by political decree. This evolution can never be avoided. The authority of revolution is political in the end; the power of evolution is political. But whether in eruptive revolution or in transforming evolution, Socialists must never forget that the industrial State and its appropriate methods is an aspect of the political State and its methods, that both are embodied in Society, and that the unity of both must be firmly fixed in every mind which is considering either the method or the goal of progress.

X

REVOLUTION

REVOLUTION is the result of resistance offered to movements that cannot be resisted, not an upset deliberately arranged for by the exponents of some new ideas. Revolution is the product of ideas, but the ideas must be confined in order to be explosive. Until ideas are resisted by force they cannot make revolutions. Of course there are revolutions which are not democratic and which have nothing to do with social revolution. There is the military *coup d'état,* there is the palace conspiracy when one ruler displaces another, there is the revolution of Sidney Street when Ishmael comes into civi-

lisation from his wilderness and holds up civilisation. Of these I do not speak. I speak of the kind of revolution which some people think to be necessary if capitalism is ever to be supplanted by Socialism; of that revolutionary propaganda and vision which have arisen from the Russian Revolution, and which, discarding the historical, scientific method of Marx, adopt the metaphysical philosophy which Marx and Engels so unmercifully trounced.

A revolution dreamt of and planned, because, logically, an old order must refuse to be transformed, is an absurd thing. Yet, to a very considerable extent such is the position of the "revolutionary" movement here. Its logic begins by misunderstanding the nature of society, believing it to be a hard resisting structure, an old bottle which contains in physical separateness the new wine, a house in which an increasing family dwells. Whereas the social organisation, like the body, is in a constant state of change and of readaptation, respon-

sive to every movement of the human intelligence, sensitive to every change in the mass will. That is so whether "economic determinism" or "intellectual determinism" is right, whether progress proceeds by a class struggle or by the readjustment of functions in a society growing in vigour and completeness.

Equally false are its excuses why it should not use democracy. The democracy may be ignorant and unresponsive to truth and new ideas; a revolution will not make it intelligent. Capitalism to-day may use "democracy in the mass" for its own ends; cannot governing Labour do the same? Will the seizure of power by a few paralyse forever the opposition of opponents, or teach the masses the wisdom that nothing else has taught them, or induce them to fit themselves into conditions which now create in their lethargic minds hostility and opposition?

So, the logic I am examining adds to its

other faults that of ending its reasoning at the point where it should begin and, having made its criticisms, it tires of its pursuits and leaves its constructive programme to chance. The beginning of the end of its constructive work is: Wait and see. Serious men must protest against such reckless folly. Socialism asks of its friends patient and laborious thought, rectitude, and an ability to handle great affairs. We have had enough revolutions of the sword and the turmoil. Socialism asks for a revolution of the trowel and the disciplined intelligence.

The conception of revolution which I criticise also misunderstands itself. It thinks that revolution can be born from the wills of a select few meeting with the opposition or the lethargy of the many, whereas it can only be created when the weight of pent-up opposition smashes through the barriers which hold it back. It thinks it can make itself; it can only be made by social pressure. It thinks that revolution

is a matter of metaphysics and logic; it is a matter of social friction.

With one aspect of the revolutionary impulse I am in complete sympathy. It demands action; it is weary of declarations and resolutions which produce nothing. We have all had this feeling enlivened by the work of the Second International. It met at Berne, and declared its position on the great international interests of the day—the Treaty of Peace, national boundaries, the League of Nations; and it resolved to send a deputation of enquiry into Russia. Nothing has happened. Its wisdom has been treated with contempt by the Governments; its request for passports has met with denial casually given. Its Permanent Commission has met in Amsterdam and again in Lucerne. It has repeated its wisdom and the Governments have repeated their rebuffs. Never has a more ample supply of crumbs been thrown from the masters' table; never with more insult has Labour been refused a place at

the feast. Its power in small things has been increased; in the large affairs and policies of States it is as weak to-day as ever it was. In these times of critical action when decisions are to determine the fate of generations this weakness is a special grievance. No one requires to come and tell me, by marshalled argument and indignant rhetoric, of the humiliation under which Labour suffers. It cuts like a thong into one's soul. It is the putting up of barriers against ideas which makes ideas revolutionary.

But, obviously, whoever longs for action cannot long for any action—for the forlorn splash of the topmost ripples over the barriers. When we think of it, the inaction which is so galling is the inaction of those feeding on the crumbs under the table. It is inaction because the leverage for action is not there. True, some leaders are partly to blame for this. The action, for instance, of the French Minority at the meetings of the International could not be

otherwise if they were a wing of the Governments serving the interests of the Governments. That, however, is not the determining factor. The Socialist is not in authority; his guns are too far off for him to plant his shells in the midst of the enemy's camp. The only action which is possible at the moment is that of changing opinion and awakening intelligence. There may be strikes for this and riots for that, and this may be gained and that may be won. It is true that Labour in an unsettled frame of mind and in an ugly temper makes Governments careful, but where does that bring us? All these things are only checks. When we come to consider the position of the Miners' Federation in relation to mining affairs we are in the presence of a different set of conditions. Here we have a body of men well knit together in their own interests, who come to resolutions and who can act upon them because of their organisation. Thus it has come about that thoughtless persons are always telling the

miners that they should strike for this course and for that, forgetting all the time that the Miners' Federation is not an association of general human regeneration formed for the purpose of making it unnecessary for those who would advise it to take upon their own shoulders the burdens of their advice.

I doubt if any model of political action is more misunderstood, both by friend and foe alike, than is the Miners' Federation. It is a mining organisation formed for industrial purposes; its membership is confined to mine workers, its immediate objects are concerned with pits. In these days of interlaced influence and concern such a body must have a hand in politics, and if the worker industrially organised were called upon to save his nation by industrial action, the Federation would be expected to play its part, and, no doubt, would do it. But it is not the instrument of action such as I am now discussing. When the representatives of the Second International go to the

Governments, they have no body behind them such as Mr. Smillie has when he asks for a Coal Commission. If they had, they would produce action. The intelligence of the people has never yet translated their potentialities of power into power itself, and therefore the conditions of effective action such as is asked for do not exist, and before we have action they must exist. To create it without them is only playing at revolution. Any man can raise a standard, but it requires a disciplined crowd to win the battle.

Therefore, when people impatiently demand action they ought to see first of all that the conditions of action are present; if they are not they should help to create them. Only when that is done can they reasonably blame leaders. When they do that work they will find that the weapon which they have been fashioning for use is, in this country, at any rate, not a revolutionary, but a political one. As the conditions of a revolution are created they will filter

into Parliament, and there the action will take place. Again, I appeal to our active spirits to go in for real politics and not to be content to indulge in metaphysical ones. Fight and educate; educate and fight. It is true that in the meantime the hateful reaction will be in authority, but the reaction knows that the most ominous thing it has to face is a steadily growing beleaguering army.

We must analyse revolution into its stages. The Socialist stage of the Russian revolution followed the political stage, and consists of two sections—that of programme and that of method. I leave out of account the Terror and similar incidents, not only because most of them are mere fabrications,* but because they

* The number of times that Kropotkin and other people whose names are known in Great Britain have been shot, has become a joke, but the prettiest of all the tales is one which, so far, I have only seen in foreign newspapers. When Maria Spiridonovna was tried for characterising one of Tchicherine's notes to the Allies as "a base betrayal of the Russian work-

belong to the counter-revolution and have nothing to do with the political colour of the party in power. Besides, Lenin abhors them, whereas Koltchak glories in them. The programme is such, on the whole, as any Socialist government would put into operation, though its land policy would be stronger in this country and, with some preliminary preparation, its proposals regarding wealth conscription would have been less crude. The distinctive revolutionary feature was therefore that of method. Now, the method depended solely upon the fact that a political revolution had been neces-

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ers," the Stockholm newspaper manufactory of atrocities reported that she had been sentenced to be shot and our newspapers displayed the news with appropriate moral disgust. The fact is that this revolutionary showed by her behaviour in the Court that she was terribly overstrung (revolution with her had not been a pastime), and the "sentence" actually passed on her was a year in a sanatorium, with a rider added that it was hoped she might enjoy her rest to gain new strength "through healthy physical and mental work."

sary, and that the country was bankrupt and in a state of political and industrial collapse.

In this country we have had our political revolution. Everyone who has come into touch with the revolutionaries of the non-democratic countries of Europe must have been struck with the limited nature of their intentions. How often have I heard British Socialists comment that they were only Liberals or at best Radicals. Thus, so far as this country is concerned, we have reached the stage when the Socialist programme is a matter of political fighting. A Parliamentary election will give us all the power that Lenin had to get by a revolution, and such a majority can proceed to effect the transition from capitalism to Socialism with the co-operation of the people, and not merely by edict. More than that, a country which has gained already all that a political revolution can give it, cannot begin its social revolution as Russia began its. To have an election followed by a revolution for the pur-

pose of carrying out the programme of the defeated minority belongs to the world of playfully fanciful romance, not to that of serious politics. I can imagine that a Socialist government in Parliament may be met by obstruction, and in the country by agitation. But if that government has the country behind it, it will stand no humbug in Parliament; if it has not the country behind it, it can neither work Parliament nor create a revolution. It certainly should be bold; if as a result of this boldness, Parliament began to work and the opposition were overawed into decency—good and well; if not, a revolution would still be a thing which could not be pulled off. Of course, if it came to be that we had a bankrupt country, a demoralised and disorganisel people, and anarchy, either active or latent, from one end of a ruined nation to the other, a Committee of Public Safety might well step into Whitehall and make up its mind to impose a New Order upon an Old Chaos, but the origin and circum-

stances of that revolution would not be those of the committee room, the book logic, the minority intellectual wisdom which our present day anti-Parliamentarians offer as a means of Socialist progress. Therefore, I conclude that for a progressive movement here to try and copy Russian methods, or create Russian conditions, is to go back upon our own evolution, and that if the design were successful it would only bring us face to face with the very same difficulties as Parliamentary methods have to meet.

This consideration does not weigh, however, with those who have abandoned political action. They say that chaos must come and that it ought to be created, because only then will the vigour of Socialism manifest itself as it did in Russia after the fall of Kerensky. These people value vigour for its own sake, not for its results, and yet strangely enough this most metaphysical of all conceptions of social change is held by those who are specially fond of call-

ing themselves "scientific." The adjective would be given to them by no one else but themselves.

Will Socialist forces act better under revolutionary than under Parliamentary conditions? The greatest weakness of Socialist forces is their tendency to split up and to dissipate their spirit in internal disputes just at the moment of apparent success. Ever since I have been a member of the Independent Labour Party this curse has troubled it. The religious disputes on grace and salvation which have always weakened religious revolutions, crop up to this day amongst political pioneers. A revolution should be a signal not for closing ranks but for opening them up. Its unsettlement affects the revolutionists themselves. Whoever has followed events in revolutionary Europe during the past twelve months must be convinced that the divisions in the Socialist ranks must have brought Socialist power to a speedy termination were it not that defeat in

the field during the war had completely demoralised the counter-revolution and deprived it of all chance of an immediate rally. The treatment that the Social Revolutionaries have had at the hands of the Bolshevists, the fratricidal conflicts in Germany, the divisions in Hungary, should be studied not as evidence that there are Socialists who are not Socialists, but that revolutions disrupt the parties that ought to benefit by them. So do Parliamentary methods, but their consequences are nothing compared with the other. The reason for this must be apparent to everyone. Fear always shadows revolution; suspicion sits at the table with every Committee of Public Safety. A revolution presents every Socialist problem for simultaneous settlement; it is the road of maximum difficulty; it is also the occasion both of minimum confidence and co-operation and of the necessity of concentrating power in the hands of a few. Only reckless folly would deliberately choose this way of minimum chance

of bringing Socialism about and of establishing the Socialist State.

Every Socialist relationship is so interdependent, that under the most favourable conditions much failure must attend the first schemes of socialisation. No one could preach a better sermon on that text than Lenin, unless it were Bela Kun. When these failures have to be faced in one nation alone they are trying enough; when they are attended by a revolution which draws upon itself the enmity of the world, they will break the ablest and the most devoted men. For a revolution, by destroying, or at any rate paralysing for the time being, the ordinary economic life of a nation makes that nation dependent upon foreign states. It must, therefore, receive foreign sympathy and support. So long as the world is ruled by capitalism this support will not be forthcoming. A Socialist revolution in this country could be starved out by America much more easily than the Socialist revolu-

tion in Russia can be fought out by the Allies.

No wise Socialist need plot and plan a revolution. If bankruptcy ends the present order in disaster and disgrace, if the meanness of mind of our politicians who for momentary triumphs degrade public life and mislead the country like demagogues and charlatans until Parliament has forfeited respect and neither persons nor institutions wield moral or political authority, if prices of commodities keep high and life becomes harder, if we continue to be made the prey of profiteers and plunderers and the evidences of their ill-gotten gains are to be flaunted in the face of the distressed people, if the mind of the mass is the subject of daily misrepresentation in a contemptible press, and if the desire of the best thought of democracy to find expression and to be consulted as a responsible authority is thwarted by tricksters and cheap jacks, then Labour troubles will become chronic, restlessness will defy reason, anarchy will spread,

and social cohesion will be destroyed. Then also the duty of Socialists will be clear. That will be the friction which causes revolution, that will be the hindrance which makes ideas explosive. The Socialists alone can then save the State, and a decisive act of commanding will be required to do it. It may be a minority that will have to act, but, in this process of creating revolutionary conditions, the majority will have been deprived of its authority, of its intelligence, of its defences, of justice. It will have been weakened by fear, and be made cowardly by its own sense of its criminality and unworthiness.

XI

THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

I CANNOT conceive that the end of good government is to make Society stagnant by its excellence and to lull the individual into quiescence by the security he feels under it. Nor can I conceive of any rational theory of progress that depends upon periodic and violent revolution as a means. Every day comes with its own revolution in a progressive society just as a series of explosions produces motion and a series of impacts produces harmony. The individual, energetic in mind and in action, is too valuable to his community to be lulled to

sleep or to be condemned if he occasionally produces trouble and inconvenience. The revolutionary and exploring spirit will always be necessary to keep Society from stagnating. It is not a menace to Society; it is the life of Society. Therefore, whilst the Socialist conception of Society remains fixed, its creeds and methods must never sink into infallible dogma and its gospels become closed books. It is said of Marx that he was once overheard muttering to himself, "Thank God, I am no Marxist," and his great protagonist, Clara Zetkin, has written, "When the pen fell from Marx's hand, the last word on Socialism had not been written."

In maintaining this revolutionary and critical mind, it is futile to scurry about from feverish dream to feverish dream. The minds which do this are generally those which live on superficialities—now the panacea of a new electoral system, now the Gileadite test of some phrase or dogma, now the heaven-disclosed

evangel of a new thought. Nothing is of any use till it is digested and set into the system of action in which it is to play a part, and the homage done to the Russian Revolution by an uncritical adoption of its phases and its phrases is not one worthy of acceptance by those to whom it is offered.

The Russian Revolution has been one of the greatest events in the history of the world, and the attacks that have been made upon it by frightened ruling classes and hostile capitalism should rally to its defence everyone who cares for political liberty and freedom of thought. But it is Russian. Its historical setting and parentage is Russia; the economic State in which it is is Russia. Moreover, it is still in its eruptive stage, and has hardly passed under the moulding hand of evolution. What it is to become, who can say? All we can do is to see that it has a chance of becoming something, and not die away like the Peace Night flares that are gleaming in the sky as I write

this. To cry as flare after flare goes up: "This is the permanent pillar of fire which is to light us to Canaan," is certainly not common sense. We know that some expedients have been purely temporary; we know that others cannot bear close and detailed examination.* For them the comprehensive excuse, which is a justification under the circumstances, can be made that they belong to the stress of revolution. History may justify their authors, but it certainly will not their copyers. Lenin in this respect is too big a man to be a Leninite, as he told Bela Kun when Hungary passed under Soviet Government.

Political action remains the normal method of transforming the structure of communities, both politically and socially. The problem of adapting it to its work is far from being solved, that of mass action is only beginning

* I commend a careful study of Mr. Ransome's book, *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, to everyone who really wishes to understand Russian events.

to be understood. Treatises on the subject written by the last great school of political theorists, the Radicals, are out of date. The task of the Socialist is to make enlightenment come quick—but it must be enlightenment; to co-ordinate in a movement all the forces that make for organic change such as he wishes; to concentrate, in this time of unsettled minds and habits, upon great essentials, as the Miners' Federation is doing in its own concerns; and to prevent the world from being closed to new ideas and experiments like those now coming from Russia.

If this is said to be slow, I reply that it need not be so, but that, if it is, it is so by the nature of Society, and no revolutionary action can be planned to avoid the slowness. All short cuts swing round in a circuit to where they started. The footpath is for the individual, the high road for the crowd. It is hard for Socialists to fight capitalism; it is much harder for them to fight Nature. Whether by revolution or without it,

the transformation of the economic structure of Society is no easy undertaking, as Lenin is now confessing, and the success of the venture must depend in a very great measure upon the spirit in which it is undertaken. One kind of spirit which appeals to the impatience of the time is, I believe, to lead Socialism into disaster proportionate to the simplicity with which it presents our problems and the dogmatic logic with which it supports them. To such minds force and authority are the characteristic modes of thought and expedients for action. They deal with book logic, and not with Society; they begin their researches by writing their conclusions; and their political method is at enmity with liberty. In every country, though especially in those governed tyrannically, the revolutionary type is bred. It is there the salt of the earth. It lives like hunted beasts; its life is constantly in its hands; it is defiant and untamable; it acquires the psychology of the powers with which it is at war; it would

leap into police offices, as they have leaped into them, and turn upon rulers the captured machine, as soldiers turn captured guns upon their late owners. Without these men, Europe to-day would be a filthy, stagnant pool. But it is quite different with imitators who in peaceful streets try to feel like them, who use imagination to surround themselves with the hardships in which the originals live, and who in humdrum lives find romance in revolutionary dogmas. This pseudo-revolutionism has nothing in common with the real thing—and certainly nothing in common with Socialism. It subverts Socialism; it distracts and disrupts it; it gives it no personalities who can be relied upon and no guidance which is illuminating. It is particularly destructive amongst the youth who start with a gay spurt up the hill of life—may they never do otherwise!—and leaves them when their first wind has been exhausted on a trackless country.

The Socialist spirit is that of liberty, of dis-

cussion. It is historical and not cataclysmic. It is objective as well as subjective; it can understand as well as feel. It can admire even when it does not agree. Such admiration is part of the capacity to transform Society, because that transformation depends upon a relationship between the mind of the reformer and his social circumstances. It knows that there are various roads leading to the same trysting place; that the Russian comrades may come one way and the British come another way; that the method of success is the co-operation of differences within Socialism rather than a formal unity which gives full freedom of advance to no section. To-day it recognises that there is one tactic possible to the people of defeated countries, another possible to people the political fabric of whose States has fallen to the earth, another to the people whose nations are dancing through victory celebrations and as military conquerors are emerging from the psychology of war to meet the prob-

lems of peace. A tactic which claims universal uniformity as a characteristic is self-condemned.

Above all it discards lightning changes as the way to realise itself. It knows that no system of government or of society can rest upon anything but common consent—the consent of passive minds, or the consent of active minds. The latter kind of consent is the only one it values. The idea of a revolution transforming the structure of Society by the will of a minority must seem as Utopian to it as the ideas of the Owenites and of all who sought to create an oasis of peace in the wilderness of the capitalist system. It believes in democracy, not only as a moral creed which alone is consistent with its views of humanity, but because it is the only practical creed. It knows that, revolutions or no revolutions, public consent is the basis of all social order and that the good builder makes his foundations sound before he puts up his storeys.

The Independent Labour Party is a product of British history and British conditions. It is neither Russian, nor German, nor American. It found the Radical movement as one ancestor, the trade union movement as another, the intellectual proletarian movement—Chartism and the earlier Socialist thinkers like Owen, Hall, Thompson—as another; the Continental Socialists—especially Marx—as still another. It has gathered up its inheritance and has produced from it an historical movement of its own, political in its method, free in its spirit, economic in its purpose. It comes after the Liberal political revolution, and it therefore joins democracy to Socialism, carrying on in this respect the work of Marx. It knows that opinion must always precede reconstruction, but it also knows that the harvest of Socialism does not ripen in a night and has therefore to be gathered at one cutting, but that every day brings something to fruition, that the moments as they go bring us nearer to Socialism

by their products of Socialist thought and experiment which have to be seized and embodied in the transforming structure of Society, not in a bunch, but bit by bit. It believes in the class conflict as a descriptive fact, but it does not regard it as supplying a political method. It strives to transform through education, through raising the standards of mental and moral qualities, through the acceptance of programmes by reason of their justice, rationality, and wisdom. It trusts to no regeneration by trick or force. Founding itself on the common sense of every day experience, it knows that, come enthusiasm or depression, impatience or lethargy, the enlightened State can be built up and maintained only by enlightened citizens. It walks with the map of Socialism in front of it and guides its steps by the compass of democracy. It issues from the past, it deals with the present, it has a clear conception of the future; it unites these relationships into a great living movement. In the Inter-

national it co-operates with its kindred. Upon its consistency with itself depends its success, and upon its success depends the future of Socialism in this country.

MEMORANDUM ON HOUSE OF COMMONS BUSINESS PRESENTED TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE LABOUR PARTY ON THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

I.—The Position of Members.

The present procedure of the House of Commons regarding legislation is as follows:—

1. *The Cabinet.* All important legislation is introduced by Government, and the Government has sole control of the effective time of the House of Commons.

Policy as a rule is discussed in connection with financial supply, for which one day a week (Thursday, as a rule) is assigned. A practice has been maintained of leaving the opposition parties the choice of what supply shall be put down week by week, and the various opposition groups in the House of Commons (before the war, these were the Conservative, the Irish, and the Labour Parties) have a share of the twenty-one days allotted by Standing Orders (the Labour Party has three days) in proportion to their membership in the House. In this

way it can be said that the Opposition can always bring up for debate in the House of Commons any question of departmental policy which it desires to discuss. In actual practice, however, this amounts to very little, because before the discussion takes place the policy has been inaugurated, and though the debate may lead to modifications by exposing blunders, if the vote is challenged the Government puts on its Whips and can rely upon the support of its majority. Still, it is a mistake to assume that a government is indifferent to everything but votes. Minorities have influence in the House of Commons.

The consideration of Government Bills takes up the greater part of the time of the Session which remains, and owing to comparatively recent developments in the theory and practice of the Opposition, Parliamentary work has become more and more a contest between two big parties in the House. Thus, the rights of Private Members to initiate legislation have not only been curtailed by the amount of time which Government business requires, but have ceased to occupy any considerable place in the minds of Members of the House of Commons owing to the view which ordinary members of Parliament have come to take of their Party duties.

2. *Private Members.* The Standing Orders of the House of Commons still retain certain Private

Members' rights, although these Standing Orders are always subject to modification by resolutions relating to business moved by the Government and supported by a Government majority.

In ordinary times the rights of a Private Member consist in (1) the right to initiate legislation; (2) the right to move resolutions.

The Fridays from the beginning of the Session up to Whitsuntide are reserved for the Second Reading discussion of Bills introduced by Private Members who are fortunate in the ballot which is taken at the beginning of each Session, and two Fridays after Whitsunday for the Report Stages of such of those Bills as have gone through Committee. A Friday sitting, however, is a short one, and it is well recognised that the Speaker is not likely to grant the closure so as to get a Second Reading Division upon any Bill which is of first-rate importance, although after the subject of Women's Suffrage had often been discussed the closure was given year after year. There is also an unwritten rule—which one is well advised to recognise—that, if the closure is to be given, the mover and seconder of a Friday Bill must have finished their speeches before one o'clock. Thus they are allowed about three-quarters of an hour between them. A list of Bills introduced on Fridays during the last ten or twelve years, and finally put upon

the Statute Book, contains hardly a single measure of importance.

When a Private Member's Bill gets a Second Reading on a Friday it has to go to Committee, and unless it gets through Committee in time to get a good place amongst Bills discussed on the first two Fridays after Whitsuntide, it has very little chance of being heard of again that Session.

In some instances, however, where the Bill is practically non-contentious or is being blocked by an insignificant number of Members, the Government is induced to take it up as a Government measure, and it has a chance of being pushed through amongst the miscellaneous collection of Bills which pass towards the end of a Session.

In addition to this, Private Members have occasionally been able to get small Bills on some subject (for instance, Registration of Births Bill), upon which for one reason or another active public opinion has been roused, before the House of Commons and passed as non-opposed after eleven o'clock, or they have been able by careful study of the Order Paper to get them discussed at times when the House of Commons would otherwise adjourn. This, however, amounts to very little.

In short a Private Member has become a mere follower and supporter of the Government, with little

initiative, little independence, and little power. In addition to the Friday Bills a Private Member can move resolutions. He can do this in connection with supply and the sittings of the House from 8.15 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays after the address has been disposed of up to Easter, and Wednesdays between Easter and Whitsuntide are at his disposal provided he is successful in a ballot. But again, though the debate may be interesting, it has rarely any practical bearing on legislation or administration. There is no power behind it, and the Government discards the decision of Parliament if it wishes.

Government Time.

The question of Parliamentary time has a deciding influence upon all proposals for House of Commons reform.

The notion that it is the business of an Opposition to obstruct has given rise to an Opposition policy to waste as much time as possible. This is having disastrous effects upon Parliamentary Government and has brought servitude to the Cabinet in its train, together with closure rules which destroy discussion.

Government time (exclusive of supply) should not be more than one-half the time of a Session, and the Government should be protected against wanton ob-

struction by the creation of a form of closure which gives a chairman (acting with a Committee of Chairmen) powers to select the amendments to be taken, and also to declare that a discussion has brought out all the salient points and must be ended.

Other Time-Sittings of Parliament.

The remainder of the time should be divided between supply, Bills that have received the approval of the Committee on Legislation (discussed at a later point in this Memorandum), reports from the various committees proposed to be set up, resolutions brought in under the various provisions of the Standing Orders, and adjournment motions as now provided for.

Business unfinished in one Session should, on resolution of the Committee on Legislation, be carried over to the next Session, but no Bill which has only got the length of a Second Reading should claim this privilege. The business of the Committee on Legislation should not be interrupted, however, by the close of the Session.

In view of the increasing work which the House of Commons is called upon to do, which will not be diminished, though it may be changed in character and importance by devolution, the present hours of meeting are unsatisfactory. Morning sessions must be

more frequent. It is of the greatest importance that in every Session there should be at least one discussion on the general policy of departments, and that could be secured by special morning sittings.

II.—The Problem of Legislation.

Legislation from session to session must be a systematic treatment of national needs. Therefore it cannot be left to the disorganised efforts of Private Members who interest themselves in special questions.

(1) There must be some organ of Parliament producing Bills which, session by session, meet national requirements, and which are systematically related to the existing body of law and administration.

(2) This organ, whether it is a Cabinet or some other kind of Parliamentary Committee, must not reduce the Private Member to a state of impotence and servitude.

I propose:

(1) That the political heads of the chief departments should constitute, as they now do, a Cabinet whose main functions will be:

(a) To co-ordinate administration with legislation and the departments with Parliament.

(b) To be responsible collectively for the main lines and subjects of legislation from session to session.

(2) That at the beginning of every session there should be appointed from Members not holding official positions a Committee on Legislation, the various parties and groups in the House being represented in proportion to their numbers. The duty of this Committee should be:

(a) To appoint Sub-Committees to report upon proposed legislation as the Committee thinks fit.

(b) To report upon Private Members' Bills to the Cabinet and to the House of Commons.

(c) To cause Bills to be prepared, and for this purpose to have a staff of official draftsmen.

(d) To consult with the departmental officials concerned in the business which it is considering.

(e) To report to the House of Commons from session to session on legislation passed and required.

It should not deal with Cabinet Bills. The functions of this Committee are so important as to require the creation of a secretariat equipped in the most efficient way.

I am not, however, in favour of this Committee being the sole source of legislation. I think that the Government should be responsible for the main legislative work of the session, but this Committee should take a wider survey of national needs and should in particular see that matters which lie outside those which press themselves upon a Cabinet, which considers principally departmental needs and party obligations, are not neglected. International legislation should also be watched by this Committee. The contact between this Committee and the Cabinet should, however, be very intimate and should be carried on through these channels:

(a) Ministers summoned for consultation as need arises.

(b) Contact with any Committee appointed by the House of Commons to assist departments.

The Committee and Private Members.

The ballot for Bills at the beginning of each session is obviously an unsatisfactory arrangement and inadequate. For the time being it should be continued, however, and Bills thus favoured by fortune should go through the existing procedure, but be examined by the Committee on Legislation with a view

to facilities being given to those Bills of which the Committee approves. In addition to that the Committee should consider and report upon other Private Members' Bills, priority being given to Bills sent to the Committee after introduction to the House of Commons with the support of at least forty Members.

Parliamentary Time.

The effect of these proposals would be to increase the number of Bills prepared for discussion and partly discussed, but not to increase Parliamentary time which seems to be necessary if the work of Parliament is to be improved.

The following points, however, must be noted:

(1) Obstruction is practised against the Government and the measures which carry out Government policy, and these proposals (a) will bring legislative proposals before Parliament for which the Government is not responsible; and (b) will enable the Government to transfer to the Committee on Legislation a great many Bills which the Government has now to take in charge. This, by removing the motives for obstruction, is tantamount to increasing the time of Parliament.

(2) The present hours during which the House of Commons meets are not favourable for the dis-

patch of business. For instance, the hours between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. are not of much use except for grand partisan demonstrations on the occasions of great debates. A dinner before a demonstration is an expedient the value of which is well known to the stage managers of the parties. Forenoon sittings are objected to chiefly on the grounds (a) that Ministers must attend to departmental duties; (b) that Members who are doing their duty have to devote the morning to correspondence and other Parliamentary work; and (c) that Members in business must devote to business their forenoons before going to the House of Commons. I do not consider that these considerations are so weighty that no forenoon sittings can be held, and I should like to see the House meeting for two days a week at 10 or 10.30 a.m. and rising at 8 p.m.

(3) Committees should be used more freely than they are to discuss the details of Bills (Committee stage). (This has been done since this Memorandum was drafted.)

Votes of Members.

There is perhaps no greater scandal in the whole procedure of the House of Commons than the use of Whips. Party followers, irrespective of their own convictions, are thus practically compelled to vote

as the Cabinet—or indeed often a Minister—has decided for them. This is really a comparatively recent growth, and has arisen because Parliament has become more completely an instrument in the hands of the Government, and the floor and the division lobbies the arena of a never-ending partisan conflict. The most trivial and unessential details of a Bill are thus regarded as matters of confidence in the Government, and the free criticism of the House and the responsible action of Members are being suppressed by the Party machine. This has been carried to such an extent that Members are ceasing to act as responsible representatives, and are losing the capacity so to act. On the few occasions when Party Whips are not put on, the crowd of Members streaming into the lobbies without any knowledge of, or opinion upon, the question at issue is swayed with confusion, and this confusion is sometimes used as an argument in favour of the Whips, whereas it is a proof of the mischief of the present practice. The subservience of Members in the division lobbies cannot be separated from the subordination of the Private Members in legislation.

By diminishing the legislative power of the Government and by introducing a new legislative authority (the Committee on Legislation) we diminish the extent of the Whips' operations.

That, however, is not enough, and the House of Commons should, by resolution supported by the conduct of Members who care for the responsibility of Parliament as a whole, put an end to the practice of considering every trifling amendment as a declaration of want of confidence in the Government.

Departmental Committees.

I have now to consider the question of Committees of the House to deal with departmental business and watch policy.

The appointment of these Committees is advisable for the following reasons:

(a) To use the abilities of Members of Parliament in a way which the existing system does not do;

(b) To instruct Parliament and make it a more business-like assembly;

(c) To narrow the gulf that is opening between the Executive and the Legislature and to restore to each—

(1) its proper constitutional functions, and

(2) its interdependent relationships.

The Functions of the Committees.

Various views are held of what the functions of the Committees ought to be, and their relations to the Cabinet, Parliamentary control, and Ministers, but these may be conveniently summarised under three headings. They might:

(a) Determine departmental policy.
(b) Consult with Ministers regarding departmental policy.
(c) Keep in touch as representatives of Parliament with departmental policy.

These three possible functions are not complementary to each other, but indeed represent differing views of the utility of such Committees and should be considered separately.

(a) *Determine Departmental Policy.*

The chairman of such a Committee should obviously be responsible (a) to the Cabinet, and (b) to the House of Commons; otherwise there will be two authorities, and this will not work satisfactorily.

Note:

(a) Would such a chairman have access to papers and information denied to the members of the Committee? This would have special point as regards the Foreign Office.

(b) Would minorities be expected to be quite free to act as independent members (as partisans, in an extreme instance) when the business of the department is discussed by the whole House? Or, to put this differently, would minorities go on to the Committees as watchdogs for their Party and use their knowledge for partisan fighting? Would this system discourage partisan fighting, or intensify it, or make no difference to it?

The position of the Minister-Chairman must be considered.

(1) The system would tend to make each department independent and destroy collective government responsibility; but

Note.—The Chairman might pursue a party policy agreed to by a Cabinet which the majority of the Committee would support in the same way as majorities now support Governments. Thus we could have a change in machinery without a change of substance. This is "Government by Committee," and I believe that such a change would be for the worse and not the better. To substitute a Committee for a Minister or to govern by a Committee and a Minister-Chairman would remove none of the evils of our present practice, but might accentuate them.

(2) For what would the Minister speak in Parliament? A Cabinet or his Committee? And who would

resign on a serious adverse vote—the Minister, the Government, the majority of the Committee?

I am inclined to take the following view:

(a) It would be a gain to have more departmental independence.

(b) At the same time we must retain in general policy some form of Government responsibility as I do not believe that we could get the best from Committees of various abilities and views acting quite independently and unguided by a common outlook and a common conception of progressive effort expressed either in a party programme or by the decisions of representative consultation.

I therefore think that a scheme devised from the next two proposals would be best.

(b) *Consult with Ministers.*

A Committee with powers thus limited might be:

(a) Summoned only when Ministers wish. (Such Committees have been set up since the war began.)

(b) Independent, meeting at regular times, making their own enquiries, and deciding for themselves what they wished to do as consultants.

Clearly the second is the only tolerable position. Such a Committee should be presided over by the Minister who should be ex-officio member and Chair-

man, but who should be in the position of a judge acting with assessors. The Committee should express its views, but the responsibility of acting must be upon the Minister. The powers of such a Committee should include:

(a) Examination of departmental estimates before final decisions.
(b) Consideration of departmental bills.
(c) Consideration of departmental policy, especially of a wide character.
(d) In the application of the Whitley proposals to Government departments the Committee should rank as the employer.
(e) The publication of an annual report on the work and policy of the Department.

When departmental business is before the House of Commons, the members of such Committee would be free to act as uncommitted Members of Parliament, but their criticisms would be based on knowledge and their actions controlled by responsibility.

Note.—It might be that the differences in the nature of departments, e.g., Home Office and War Office, Local Government Board and Foreign Office, Treasury and Colonial Office, might, in any event during an experimental stage, necessitate that somewhat different terms of reference should be drawn up for some of the Committees.

(c) *Keep in Touch with Departmental Policy.*

I do not think that this alone is adequate. The power of merely sitting, of calling for information, of discussing without the Minister being present, would not bear any fruitful result, but would be very likely to create a Committee that would very soon degenerate into a mere critical organ, not only with no responsibility (which is not in itself necessarily objectionable), but with a feeling of constitutional opposition to the department (which is most objectionable).

Composition of the Committees.

Much can be said for the selection of these Committees by ballot of the whole House on the principle of Proportional Representation as it is essential that upon them minorities should be represented.

The Minister's policy—in so far as it is the Government's policy—ought in justice to him to have the backing of a majority on the Committee. This end has been secured hitherto by the selection of Committees by a Committee specially appointed by the House for this purpose at the beginning of each session. Upon this Committee each Party has representation in proportion to its strength in the House, and one of its representatives is always one

of its Whips. The Whips present the list of their followers they have selected for each Committee, and the Selection Committee accepts them. This method provides for:

(a) The requisite Party balance.

(b) The selection as a rule of men who are keen to serve on this Committee or that: but it does not guarantee

(a) That the best men are selected apart from the desire of the Whip (some recent selections have been almost scandalous).

(b) That the parties represented have had any choice of their representatives.

When setting up these new Committees it is desirable that some care should be taken to secure, so far as it can be done, these two conditions.

Before making up the lists for the ballot, Members should be asked to state upon what Committee if any, they desire to be, and no Member should be allowed to serve on more than one Committee.

The Committees, the Cabinet, and Ministers.

(1) These Committees will not supplant, but supplement, the Cabinet, which will still retain:

(a) Its control over general policy.

(b) Collective responsibility, which, however, will then be upon a limited and better defined type of policy.

(2) So also Ministers will not change their present status as being responsible to the Government, but having to work with Committees the advantages of selection by the party in power will be secured without the obvious disadvantages of a direct election from Members of the party in the House of Commons. This will also enable Governments and Prime Ministers to draw upon ability in the House of Lords (the question of two Chambers was not discussed in this Memorandum, but was to be the subject of discussion later on) for Ministerial appointments.

The Cabinet.

The organisation of Parliamentary business by a party policy requires a Committee with differentiated functions like the Cabinet.

There are two conceptions of Parliament between which we must decide:

(a) The organic representation of the national will charged to carry out a policy embodying large principles of progress and social and political justice.

(b) A collection of men administering the affairs of the nation from day to day with heads acting as though they were civil servants.

Under (a) a Minister or Government would resign and refuse responsibility if Parliament decided upon a policy which he considered to be in violation of good government.

Under (b) a Minister or Government would put up a case, but, if its advice were rejected, would not continue to remain responsible for what it considered unwise or unjust.

(a) with its occasional anomalies and problems in conduct that are almost insoluble is a better principle to guide one than (b).

The abuses and dangers it presents are chiefly:

(a) Growth of power until a point is reached when the Parliamentary majority is in its private possession.

(b) A conception of its dignity which means that Parliament does not work with it, but must accept all its decisions.

(c) A conception of its unity which means that it considers itself responsible for every Minister, and that every Minister must support in everything his colleagues in the Government whether he approves or not.

The question we should consider, therefore, is how, whilst retaining Cabinets, Parliament can limit them

to their proper functions and powers and responsibilities.

Note.—The various proposals that have been made to abolish the Cabinet fail to take into consideration the fact that whether we recognise a Cabinet or not, the general policy of a party commanding a majority will be discussed and settled by a Council of party chiefs. The Cabinet can be abolished in word; it cannot be abolished in fact.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

August, 1917.

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