

# The Labour Party in Poplar.

# Workers' Dreadnought

FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM.

Founded and Edited by  
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VOL. VIII. No. 14.

SATURDAY, JUNE 18TH, 1921.

[WEEKLY.] PRICE TWOPENCE.

## BUILDING THE CITY OF TO-MORROW.

(An Extract from "Monsieur Bergeret a Paris," by Anatole France of the French Academy and an adherent to the Communist International)

Mr. Bergeret said to his daughter: "I have just committed a sin: I have given alms. In giving a penny to Clopinel, I have tasted the shameful joy of humiliating my kind. I have assented to the odious pact which assures to the strong their power and their weakness to the weak; I have sealed with my seal the ancient iniquity; I have contributed to that which has left this man with but half his soul."

"You have done all that, father?" asked Pauline incredulously.

"Almost all that," replied Mr. Bergeret. "I have sold fraternity to my brother Clopinel by false measure. I have humiliated myself in having humiliated him; for almsgiving degrades equally he who receives and he who gives. I have done wrong."

"I don't think so," said Pauline.

"You don't think so," replied Mr. Bergeret, "because you have no philosophy, and you do not know how to draw from an action, which is innocent in appearance, the infinite consequences it imports. This Clopinel has induced me to give alms. I have not been able to resist the importunity of his complaining voice. I have patted his thin neck without a collar; his knees, that the trousers strained by too long usage, have rendered like the knees of a camel; his feet, at the end of which the shoes go with open beaks, like a couple of ducks. Seducer! O dangerous Clopinel! Delicious Clopinel! Through thee my halfpenny produces a little baseness, a little shame. Through thee, by means of a halfpenny, I have constituted a particle of evilness and ugliness. In transmitting to thee this little symbol of wealth and power, I have ironically made thee a capitalist and have brought thee as a guest without honour to the banquet of society, to the festivals of civilisation. And immediately I felt I was myself one of the powerful ones of this world; one of the rich, in comparison with thee; amiable Clopinel, exquisite mendicant, flatterer! I am rejoiced, I am puffed up with pride, I am complaisant in my opulence and my grandeur. See, O Clopinel!"

"Execrable practice of almsgiving! Barbarous pity."

"Ancient error of the bourgeois, who gives a halfpenny and thinks he does good, and who then believes himself quit in relation to all his brothers, by the most miserable, the most clumsy, the most ridiculous, and the stupidest, meanest act of all that are possible of accomplishment from the point of view of an improved distribution of wealth. This custom of giving alms is incompatible with beneficence and an abomination to charity."

"Is it so?" asked Pauline eagerly.

"The giving of alms," pursued Mr. Bergeret, "is no more comparable to beneficence than the grinning of a monkey resembles the smile of La Gioconda. Beneficence is as ingenious as almsgiving is inept. Beneficence is vigilant, and proportions its effort to the need. It is precisely this that I have not done towards my brother Clopinel. The very name of beneficence awakened the gentlest thoughts in the tender souls of the century of philosophers. It has been thought that this epithet was created by the good Abbot of St. Peter's. But it has an earlier origin, as it is already found in the works



AMRITSAR THE SECOND.

of old Balzac. . . . I admit that I do not find in this word 'beneficence' its original beauty; it has been spoilt by the Pharisees, who have used it too much. We have in our present-day society, many establishments of beneficence—pawnbrokers,\* insurance societies, mutual benefit clubs. Some few are useful and render service. Their common vice is that of arising from the social iniquity they are appointed to reform; that of being contaminated medicaments. The universal beneficence is that each one lives by his work, and not by the work of others. Apart from mutual co-operation and solidarity, all is vile, shameful and barren. Human charity is the joining of all mankind in the production and sharing of the fruit of toil.

"It is justice; it is love, and the poor are more apt in its practice than the rich. What rich men ever exercised the charity of the human race as fully as Epictetus or Bernard Malon?† True charity is the gift to all of the labour of each one, it is the harmonious gesture of the soul, that empties itself, like a vase full of spikenard, and pours itself out in good deeds; it is Michael Angelo painting the Sistine Chapel; it is the Members of the National Assembly, on the night of August 4th; it is the gift, overflowing in its happy abundance, the money running pell-mell with love and thoughtfulness. Nothing is ours but ourselves. One gives truly only when one gives one's work, one's soul, one's genius. And this magnificent offering of his whole self to all mankind enriches the giver as much as the community."

"But," objected Pauline, "you could not give love and beauty to Clopinel. You have given him what was more suitable to him."

"It is true that Clopinel has become a degraded creature. Of all the good things that may give pleasure to a man, he has a taste for none but alcohol. I knew it by his smell of brandy when he approached me. But such as he is, he is our creation. Our pride was his father; our

iniquity his mother. He is the evil fruit of our vices. Everyone in society ought to give and to receive. This one has not given enough, undoubtedly because he has not received enough."

"He is lazy, perhaps," said Pauline. "What, indeed, shall we do, that there may no longer be the poor, the weak and the lazy? Do you believe that people are naturally good, and that it is society which makes them bad?"

"No, I do not think that men are naturally good," replied Mr. Bergeret. "I see, rather, that they arise painfully, and little by little, from original barbarism, and that they organise, only at the expense of great effort, a justice uncertain and a precarious good. The time is still far off when they will be kind and beneficent towards each other. The day is distant when they will make no more war between themselves, and when pictures of battles will be hidden from sight as immoral and offering a shameful spectacle. I believe that the reign of violence will endure a long time yet, and that still for long will the peoples rend each other for trivial reasons; for long will the citizens of the same nation furiously snatch from each other the means of existence, instead of sharing them equitably. But I also believe that people are less ferocious when they are less miserable; that the development of industry produces, in the long run, some softening in manners, and I have learnt from the botanist, that the hawthorn, transplanted from a harsh to a fertile soil, changes its thorns into flowers."

"There you are! You are an optimist, father! I always knew you were!" cried Pauline, stopping in the middle of the pavement to fix for a moment upon her father the regard of her dawn-grey eyes, full of soft light and morning freshness. "You are an optimist; you work with enthusiasm to build the city of the future. That is just what you do. It is beautiful to construct, together with the people of goodwill, the new republic."

Mr. Bergeret smiled at this word of hope, at those eyes of dawn.

"Yes," said he, "it would be beautiful to establish the new society, where each one would receive the price of his toil."

"That will come, will it not. . . . But when?" asked Pauline, not without simplicity.

And Mr. Bergeret answered, with a tone of gentleness and sadness in his voice.

"Do not ask me to prophecy, my child. It was not without reason that the ancients considered the power of seeing into the future to be the most fatal gift that a man could receive. If it were possible to us to foresee what will happen, there would be nothing left to us but to die, and perhaps we should succumb, struck down by misery and fear. One must build up the future as the weavers do their tapestry—without seeing it."

\* Run by the French Government. They are supposed to benefit the poor. They provide revenue for the State.

† Benoit Malon, a printer's apprentice at the time of the Paris Commune, in which he suffered. He became one of the ablest Social writers of his time, published several books and started a Socialist review.









### OUR BOOKSHELF. THE COMMUNIST PRESS.

(Under this heading we shall comment upon and study the periodical Communist Press of other countries. Although these publications are mentioned here at random a few every week, this column may prove useful to Comrades desirous of getting in touch with Comrades abroad, at the same time it will show the importance and the spread of our movement.)

I.—THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST. Official Organ. Editor: C. W. Baker.—119, Rawson Chambers, Rawson Place, Sydney.

The current issue, No. 18, contains, amongst other things, an article by J. T. Walton Newbold on "The End of the British Empire"; the reply of the resolution of American Socialists concerning affiliation to Moscow and Moscow's cutting reply inviting the workers to leave the said party; the resolution passed by the American Friends of Freedom for India, etc.

This issue also contains a suggestion for a National (Australian) Newspaper of a rather Utopian character. The signatories of this proposal, after having analysed with acuteness the present position of the Capitalist Press, propose the foundation of a daily, *founded by the Government*, with a cable service of its own, pledged to give fair play to all opinions worth considering, and governed by an Editorial Commission *free from political control*. To believe that a Government publication could be unbiased and reliable is to ignore one of the essential and fundamental principles of Communism, that is that the State—viz. the Government—is the Executive of the ruling classes and therefore *always* opposed to the emancipation of the workers, even with a Labour Party in power.

### THE TIME TO WORK.

Times are hard: trade is bad: unemployment grows. The employing classes turn on the workers and beat down their wages. Prices are still high for what one would buy; but the poor who turn to the pawnshop to tide them over their pressing difficulties, find that prices are all too low when one comes to sell.

It is uphill work doing propaganda. There are risks; D.O.R.A. still runs, and the E.P.A. claims many victims. But the Government is doing our Communist work when we go to prison: it is spreading the good seed of Communist propaganda far more swiftly, far more extensively than we in our present numbers could spread it.

Therefore, though we regret the period of inaction, the loss of vitality entailed which falls upon those comrades who go to prison, we and they know that their sacrifice is not vain, but fruitful.

The hardship of the times, to us who work for Communism, does not arise so much from imprisonment and the risk of it; these we faced with full knowledge of their inevitability, when we joined the lists of those who strive for the Communist Republic.

No, it is not the persecution of the Government that makes our task a hard one; it is the apathy of the unconverted masses, the flagging of comrades who weary for the golden age to come at once, and the hard financial strain. We are in the capitalist system, all of us; it crushes us, grinds us in its mills. In our effort to do propaganda, we bear its brunt, as every worker feels in his daily life. As the working-class mother worries over the problem of buying bread for children, so the price of paper and printing and postage wears us down.

All the comrades who sell Communist papers and pamphlets, who take an active share in the propaganda, feel the weight of the economic depression, as a two-fold burden. They feel it, all of them, in the needs of their daily lives, in the difficulty of maintaining the bare upkeep of the physical body, and in the difficulty of selling the enlightening, hopeful, necessary word of Communism to the masses of workers, hard pressed to maintain existence in these hard times.

But the hard times are the times when our Cause makes headway, for these desperate days of want are teaching the need for a change of

system, with a force the words of most ardent, most eloquent prophets could never give.

During the war, we struggled to open the eyes of men and women who flourished in physical well-being upon the slaughter of their fathers, crowding the factories, working in feverish haste to keep going the great fire of ammunition, in which the most cherished inmates of their households were speedily done to death. Big wages for all the family, and the banishment of the spectre of short-time and unemployment that haunts the lives of the workers, were potent, too potent factors in steeling their hearts against us when we tried, with our little Communist sheets, to oppose the vast, all-surrounding influence of the Capitalist press, theatre, cinema, church and school.

Now, in the days of adversity, the workers weary of Capitalism, but know not with what to replace it. They do not even conceive that it is possible to replace it. They fail to realise that the world is always changing, that human society is constantly developing, that mankind has grown up from the Stone Age to this stage, and that there is hope, nay, there is certainty, that we shall pass out of this cruel world of competition, of poverty and riches, to the days of general plenty, of safe security for every member of the human family.

Comrades, you are out of work. Comrades, you are working short. The struggle is hard: it is almost unbearable.

Yes, but you have time, precious time, opportunities to go to our fellow-workers, to tell them of Communism, to bring them into the ranks that will work for it.

Comrades, you say it is difficult to sell the papers: the workers think the 2d. too much to pay in these lean and hungry days. Yes, it is true, and that increases all our difficulties; but one cannot accomplish the Revolution without struggle.

Where the papers and pamphlets cannot go, the spoken word must be used. It happens, also, that we have been hoarding for months, the returned copies of the *Workers' Dreadnought*, that come to us from the newsagents.

So long as they last, we can let you have these back numbers if you will send for them and put them into the hands of those who will use them.

It happens, also, that there is quite a large stock of Communist pamphlets at the *Dreadnought* office in Fleet Street, which can be sold off at low rates for propaganda work.

"I do not feel willing to help you to continue publication of the *Dreadnought*, as it advocates an economic policy which I consider would ruin the Nation. I advocate Individualism as opposed to Socialism. I need hardly say that I entirely disapprove of the prosecutions of yourself and other Communists. These prosecutions are as silly as they are wrong. I greatly admire your foreign policy and opposition to the awfully wicked attacks on Russia and practical blockade of that country. I also greatly admire the courage with which you advocated peace during the war, when you risked your life at the hands of a murderous mob as well as prosecution by a bloodthirsty Government."

So writes Arnold Lupton, a brave man, who, though he is old and his health is frail, went to prison for his faith during the Great War.

Arnold Lupton is a brave man, but he does not believe in Communism. We think he does not understand it. Probably his consideration of it is clouded by prejudices aroused by the doctrines of the old-fashioned State Socialists, who are really not Socialists at all.

But does Arnold Lupton (do other men and women of good will, who love their fellow human beings), desire the Capitalist system to continue? Are they content with life as it is to-day?

Let them go down to the docks and see the unemployed fighting for jobs; men whose parents denied themselves in order that their boys might be apprenticed to good trades, fighting for the chance to do a little rough labouring work.

Let them go down to the slums and see the children deformed by malnutrition.

And let them walk round the deserted streets of the great cities in the night time and discover in the shrouded doorways, the old, penniless women, who crouch there with empty pockets and empty stomachs, hugging themselves with their weak and palsied arms.

Do they desire these things? Do they desire to have the responsibility of maintaining them?

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JUNE.

No. 6.

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