

A Speech from the Dock.

OUR comrade John Burn's speech before Mr. Justice Charles has been printed in full. It is one of those documents which will one day be eagerly sought after as illustrating a remarkable period in the Social Revolution in which we are now all of us taking a part. It is called a speech in defence of the defendant, but in point of fact, considering the nature of the evidence brought forward in support of the ridiculous charges made against our friends Burns and Graham, no defence was needed, except against the legal quibble by which the defendants were found guilty of illegal assembly and sent to jail for having committed this crime. Under these circumstances Burns' speech really took the form of an indictment against the society which had been terrified by the meeting of a few of its victims under the name of the unemployed; and which in its terror, egged on by the bourgeois press, eager to make a sensation of anything that came handy, and the tradesmen of London who pretended to think their trade was in danger, got the meeting of the 13th November proclaimed and manufactured the riots of Bloody Sunday.

Socialists may well be glad this speech has been printed, in which Burns has clearly shown that this fear of the unemployed was the genuine cause of the closing of Trafalgar Square, since it has been the fashion of the half-hearted Radical, and no-hearted Liberal M.P.'s who have been driven to take up the matter, to dwell on the point that the meeting on the 13th was a genuine political meeting and was on a different footing to those that had been held there before during last autumn. Whatever significance there was about that meeting was given to it by the previous meetings and the treatment they had met with; and I repeat that a meeting merely to protest against Irish wrongs would not have been proclaimed. Burns and Graham went to jail on behalf of the unemployed, and for the matter of that for the employed also; those who are employed to produce wealth which their employers and not themselves enjoy. Our comrade did well then to keep their case so stoutly before the court, and to take coolly whatever might befall him from the partisan judge who tried him. All Socialists should be well acquainted with their comrade's defence, not of himself but of them.

W. M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ABOUT METHODS.

As Socialists, we must look to it that sectarianism does not get amongst us. We all have practically the same ideal, but there is room among us for honest differences of opinion as to method. There is, however, no room for sarcasms about "penny whistles" or "not being able to see beyond one's nose." This kind of horse-play is apt to lead to worse.

With our aim acknowledged to be the same, why cannot each throw himself into the work that lies nearest to his hand, remembering that the work of others may not be the same as his? If he must gain recruits for his own particular regiment, let him try to draw them from outsiders. Instead of preaching to his fellow Socialists, let him visit the surrounding heathen, and he will have plenty to do there.

We all seek the most effective way of realising our ideal. "Political" say that to do this we must send men to Parliament; that though they be as voices crying in the wilderness, yet they act as propagandists. "Non-political" believe the disadvantages to more than outweigh this. The fact of such a difference of opinion existing proves that the time is not yet ripe for concerted Parliamentary action. Until we see clearly that such action is the nearest way to our common goal, then it is not the nearest way for us.

Socialists must remember that they are not mere political reformers. Reforms they have every opportunity to assist in, in their capacity of citizens and voters, and such reforms will be more readily attained if Socialism is kept out of sight. Numberless reforms have been failures, and there is no reason why Socialism, as such, should interfere, perhaps to its discredit, with what is really not Socialism at all. Though we are reformers, we are revolutionists first, parliamentary or otherwise. Let us educate and agitate ceaselessly, for there is a wide field of work before us. Then when we find that parliamentary action is clearly and unquestionably the shortest course to our goal, there will be no need to urge Socialists to political action.

Those who in their prophetic vision see no place for parliamentary action, do not, I think, recognise the many-sided aspects of the struggle. They see that mere evolution can never bring health to the body politic. Disease is on us, and its evolution is Death. As evolution is not always an advance, so evolution of our present society means degradation and retrogression. The conclusion drawn that legality must be thrown aside and only physical force used is unsound. If parliamentary action is to be rejected for ever, then ultimately a line of bayonets will have to be faced. A good general always tries to take the enemy in rear, and with a majority in Parliament we will have got behind the line of steel, and by holding the purse-strings can make the figure harmless. The final struggle will perhaps be in Parliament, and then the babble of legislators pretending to rule will sink into much desired and everlasting silence, and the new era will have begun.

W. A. CARLILE.

[This letter must close the discussion.—Eds.]

CARDINAL MANNING ON THE WORD "PROLETARIAT."

SIR.—Reading the other day a pamphlet by Cardinal Manning, entitled 'The Rights and Dignity of Labour,' I came across the following passage descriptive of a term in almost constant use at all Socialist and kindred meetings when the workers are spoken of:

"There are some people who are trying to force into the mouth of Englishmen a very long word—the *proletariat*. I have no doubt you have all heard it and all read it. When I see it in a book, I suspect the book at once. When a man says it to me, I doubt whether he is an Englishman. Our old mother-tongue has

a great many more monosyllables than polysyllables in it, and I love it all the more for that, for I think our old Saxon monosyllables have the strength of a strong race in them. Now, I had ten thousand times rather be called a working man than a proletaire. I will tell you my reasons against the name of proletaire. It is pedantry; it is paganism; it is false; and it is an indignity to the working man. It is pedantry, because it was dug up out of the old Roman law by certain French writers, chiefly in or about the time of the first French Revolution; and that accounts, perhaps, for its paganism in its revived state, and I will tell you why. The population of Rome was distinguished into classes. There were those who were called in legal phrase *capite censi*, or men told by the head. They were mere numbers; they possessed nothing; they were nothing; they could do nothing; they had two eyes and two hands and two feet, and they were entered in the poll-tax by the tale. These were the lowest of the Roman population. Next to them were *proletarii*, or men who had homes and families—if you call a home a roof or shelter where a man could lie down—but they were destitute of property. They had nothing but their children. They could only serve the State by themselves and by their children in military service, or something of that sort. Moreover, they were slaves, or to a great extent they were slaves. They were the greatest of idlers, and the most profligate and the most dependent of the Roman populace. They lived on alms; or what is worse, they were the followers and flatterers of those who had anything to give them. Well, now, I ask whether it is not an indignity to English working men to call them *proletaires*?"

Certainly if this description holds good it should not be a difficult matter to hit on a word already formed, or for the matter of that to coin one, which would be more in harmony with the idea our comrades would like to be formed of them. Perhaps some comrade may be able to give another and better description of the abused proletariat, in case the Cardinal has misread the meaning of the word.

E. W. ANDREWS.

[It seems to us that the Cardinal has proved too much for his own case. Is not the present system forcing the working-class into the position which he describes as that of the *proletarii*?—Eds.]

MR. THOMAS KIRKUP AND "FREE ENQUIRY."

COMRADE.—Those critics of political Socialism (as distinct from its active colour-bearers) who attempt to deal with the question of forces and methods of attainment—perhaps often from personal pusillanimity, sometimes from a plethora of half-science, mostly from painful innocence of the common-places of the life of live men and women—very generally betray the serious fault of ignoring the *literal* truism of the evils they can expatiate about on paper with so much dignity. Removed in the latter case from conditions they therefore cannot correctly analyse, they only perceive things, as through a glass, very darkly. Indeed the arm-chair Socialist "don't know he's living," and current existence—except in its philistine phase—has for him much more of romance than realism. The quasi-scientific revolutionist, in his anxiety to be very largely within the mark, fails to do justice to his case. As an instance in point, is his wretched superstition *re* "free enquiry" and its grasp on revolutionary propagandist work; as to the rude real business of which work, they are as intelligent as sucking-babes. If it were a harmless superstition, it would suffice to allow the gentle hands of time and experience their legitimate province in washing the colour out of it—but it isn't. It is distinctly misleading to those who are as green as its apostles, and, since it means the ignoring of that sort of facts which reverse premises, it is also unscientific. Mr. Kirkup merely records a bourgeois fetish that is infinitely too popular when he remarks with quite pathetic conviction, in connection with a paragraph on militant Socialism ('Inquiry,' p. 116), "In our country happily this discussion is an idle one. We have long enjoyed the right of free enquiry"!! Even if he meant merely legal toleration, he is sufficiently inaccurate, and on the other hand I suppose it is satisfactory—in spite of the Greek sage—to think that, socially, so amiable a writer has never personally felt the dismal variance of realities with the almost cynically comfortable creed confessed in these words. Mr. Kirkup does not repudiate (p. 113) the necessity of violent policy in certain (Continental) conditions, "where free enquiry and discussion have been mercilessly repressed," and he sympathetically admits the plausibility in the nature of things that "the violent forms of Socialism have flourished chiefly where free discussion and the reasonable right of combination among working men have been prohibited." Believing him to be sincere, it is only conceivable that the writer of the above enjoys a personal inexperience of the average Britisher's life that is altogether phenomenal. In comparatively modern politics at most it is but a question of degree. Take what I and every Socialist propagandist in the country (outside the atmosphere of well-furnished studies) know to be an every-day illustration of the falsehood of the "free enquiry" fad: I am pretty intimate with a young Socialist who has been "sacked" from successive situations four times within three years—that is to say, deprived of the means of life—simply for his by no means riotous expressions of opinion. This person happens to be fortunate enough to have so far escaped, more or less, that vengeance of labour-competition which, however, wrecks itself every day on thousands of less lucky others—dismissed, gagged, ostracised, or, if they are not crocodiles, made miserable, as a reward for the practice of the "free inquiry and discussion" which Mr. Kirkup's fancy sketch gratuitously vouchsafes us. Maybe all this is not "merciless repression." But if not, I have yet to learn the meaning of language. Then as to the myth of "free discussion and reasonable right of combination," I need not remind any student of contemporary history of the significance of Mitchelstown, Trafalgar Square, Chicago, etc., even if such a student be blind to the circumstance that the legally theoretic affirmation of these liberties is hourly belied and mocked at by the absolutely dictatorial economic powers that be.

LEONARD HALL.

What is holy? what is sacred? I reply that human happiness is holy, human rights are holy. The body and soul of man—these are sacred. The liberty of man is of far more importance than any book—the rights of man more sacred than any religion, than any scriptures, whether inspired or not.—*Ingersoll*.

Call ye that a society where there is no longer any social idea extant, not so much as the idea of a common home, but only that of a common over-crowded lodging-house? where each, isolated, regardless of his neighbour, turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get, and cries "*Mine!*" and calls it Peace, because in the cut-purse and cut-throat scramble, no steel knives, but only a far cunninger sort can be employed—where friendship, communion, has become an incredible tradition, and your holiest sacramental supper is a smoking tavern dinner, with cook for evangelist? where your priest has no tongue but for platelicking, and your high gaudes and governors cannot guide; but on all hands hear it passionately proclaimed, *Laissez-faire!* Leave us alone of your guidance—such light is darker than darkness—eat your wages and sleep.—*Carlyle*.