

posed to accept such documents as the *Encyclical* as mere subterfuges for hypocrisy will desire to explore further. We would direct their attention to that Resolution of the Bishops, which reads:—

“The Conference urges the statesmen of the world together with their people to do their utmost to frame a world policy for the fuller development and a juster distribution of the world's economic resources, to meet the needs of men and women of all nations.”

END PRIVILEGE AND BEAT COMMUNISM

But if this is necessary as between nations, is it not even more urgent as between men of the same nation? The economic resources of the earth are its natural material and forces, its minerals, its fertility, its latent electrical power, etc. To all of these, before they can satisfy any of his needs or desires, man must apply his labour, and before he can do this he must occupy some part of the earth's surface. It is obvious that the comparative ability to produce wealth on any given site must vary immensely between one site and another, and the comparative advantages of each site must be registered in its value in a free market, and this value increases in exact accordance with the presence and activity of the people, collectively. It is, in fact, their collective property. The power of monopolising any valuable site, therefore, confers an immense advantage upon the person

to whom the State grants this privilege, and it violates the first principle of property. And yet, for hundreds of years the Western peoples, and ecclesiastical organisations, have tolerated and condoned this privilege, as they have tolerated and condoned the robbery by State taxation of the wealth which men have produced by their labour. Here, surely is the ruthless economic domination that the Bishops rightly condemn; here, surely, is that fundamental breach of the moral law which they declare to be above the right of any State to ignore. To collect land value for public purposes, and to remit all the taxes which violate the individual's right to his own labour and its product will harmonise all the rights and duties which justice requires.

It is time responsible men and women gave up their obsession with isms. There is no such thing as Communism or individualism in the sense that one includes the other. There is only justice. Let the community be given all it produces, and leave with the individual all he produces; and justice will be done. Then only will the State cease from trying to usurp the functions of Providence; then only will it be possible to show the masses they are personally responsible not to the State but to God, or their own consciences.

And this will carry the war of ideas right on to the ground the Communists have chosen, and beat them there.

F. D. P.

THE W.E.A. AND PARTY PROPAGANDA

In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, November 9th, the Director of Political Education of the Conservative Political Centre complains that the Workers' Educational Association, which receives some public funds, is apparently working in collaboration with the Labour Party's electoral machine. Without entering into the merits of this controversy, the Socialist trend of thought in W.E.A. classes must be well known to many of our readers. This was certainly not the original purpose of the promoters of that Association and we think the underlying cause is not so much deliberate policy as the logical weakness of Conservative propaganda, which has almost a monopoly of anti-Socialist publicity. Conservative speakers, writers and politicians have done as much as any Socialist propagandists to repudiate and deride the principles of economic freedom and establish belief in privilege and monopoly. And if one believes that privilege or monopoly is necessary or inevitable it is only logical to believe that privilege should be made as universal as possible. This is Socialism, to which Conservatism is only the preliminary stage.

A correspondent has sent us a W.E.A. questionnaire for members of a group studying “The History of European Civilisation.” These questions are highly interesting and for the most part objective; but, nevertheless, some of them reveal the collectivist trend of thought, for example:—

“What is the general purpose of government? (Happiness, goodness, glory, prestige), or

“Should civilised life be based on co-operation or competition?

“How should a civilised society distribute the goods and services which have been produced? (According to status? work done? need?)

“How should production be arranged in a civilised world? (Problems of freedom, planning, State control, security, etc.).”

Underlying these questions might easily be the conviction that there can be no such thing as natural law in a society, that all its operations, or, at any rate, its main operations, must depend on some conscious direction, failing which the gain of one individual or section must be at the expense of another. The questionnaire does not suggest that the essential purpose of government is to establish justice; the possibility of harmonising co-operation and competition is ruled out; it seems to be suggested that the production and distribution of goods must be to some extent regulated by positive law.

Civilisation is difficult to define, but if it is taken to mean a state of society in which the arts of living, physical and mental, are developed to a considerable degree above animal existence, the history of any civilisation cannot be adequately understood unless one understands something of the method by which this development operates. The rise from animal to civilised existence could never have taken place by conscious human planning, and any further development must take place according to the principle by which it arose. Each man must himself develop his own mental and physical powers, profiting from his own experiment in living, assisted by his own observation of the experiments of others. He must be free himself, and his neighbours must be free if he is to have the maximum opportunity to develop that unit of civilisation which is himself. If some men are to order what they think is the happiness of others, and to plan the production and distribution of others' goods, then neither the planners nor the planees can have adequate opportunity to develop their own powers. In a régime of coercion the coerced as well as the coerced must be disciplined and restricted. Such a civilisation may have risen high under earlier comparative freedom, but with increased coercion it will become distorted and decline.

Man, in the animal stage of existence, produces all his own goods (or wealth) by applying his labour to land,

and he distributes his own goods (or wealth) by receiving all the product of his labour. When he starts to exchange his goods or services with other men the foundations of civilisation are laid, for the possibility of leisure and comfort is opened up, he can start to develop his higher powers. But he starts to exchange the product of his labour for no other reason than that such an exchange (he thinks) will be to his advantage. He does this at his own risk, and sometimes loses, but that he eventually benefits from his own experience the whole progress of the arts and sciences is there for us to see. Throughout the whole complex and interwoven system of exchanges in modern civilisation the same principle holds good, and each can make his highest contribution not by striving consciously to control the whole, but to make the best exchanges within the range of his own personal contacts. If he will only "mind his own business" and see that the State maintains justice, or equal freedom, the progress of civilisation and happiness is assured.

But, once any kind of injustice has been maintained for a long period in society men tend to accept it as natural and eventually connect the results of this injustice with anything but the true cause. The inevitable conse-

quences of artificial interference are assumed to arise from natural causes, and further artificial interferences are invoked in the attempt to check the effects of artificial interferences which have been overlooked.

Although the principle of exchange remains the same in the highest as in the lowest development of society, as soon as the exchange economy comes into operation another factor arises: the advantages of situation and, with it, the necessity for communal, as distinct from individual, goods and services, e.g., roads and police. This is at once the product of the community and the need of the community. Justice requires that the product of the community—the advantage of situation, or land value—should be collected by the agents of the community, to defray the cost of the community's services. Hitherto Western civilisation has neglected this requirement of justice, and it has suffered accordingly.

Socialism—as it is understood—is an attempt to substitute the privilege of the many for the privilege of the few. No relief will come to us until men and women turn aside from coercion, class-hatred and cultivation of the isms and, instead, remove privilege altogether.

F. D. P.

SETTING BOUNDS TO THE FIELDS AND THE ORIGIN OF PROPERTY

(From Anatole France's *PENGUIN ISLAND*. Translation by A. W. Evans. Edition: John Lane.)

THE island did not preserve the rugged appearance that it had formerly, when, in the midst of floating icebergs it sheltered a population of birds within its rocky amphitheatre. Its snow-clad peak had sunk down into a hill from the summit of which one could see the coasts of America eternally covered with mist, and the ocean strewn with sullen reefs like monsters half raised out of its depths.

Its coasts were now very extensive and clearly defined and its shape reminded one of a mulberry leaf. It was suddenly covered with coarse grass, pleasing to the flocks, and with willows, ancient fig-trees, and mighty oaks. This fact is attested by the Venerable Bede and several other authors worthy of credence.

To the north the shore formed a deep bay that in after years became one of the most famous ports in the universe. To the east, along a rocky coast beaten by a foaming sea, there stretched a deserted and fragrant heath. It was the Beach of Shadows, and the inhabitants of the island never ventured on it for fear of the serpents that lodged in the hollows of the rocks and lest they might encounter the souls of the dead who resembled livid flames. To the south, orchards and woods bounded the languid Bay of Divers. On this fortunate shore old Maël built a wooden church and a monastery. To the west, two streams, the Clange and the Surelle, watered the fertile valleys of Dalles and Bombes.

Now one autumn morning, as the blessed Maël was walking in the valley of Clange in company with a monk of Yvern called Bulloch, he saw bands of fierce-looking men loaded with stones passing along the roads. At the same time he heard in all directions, cries and complaints mounting up from the valley towards the tranquil sky.

And he said to Bulloch:

"I notice with sadness, my son, that since they became men the inhabitants of this island act with less wisdom than formerly. When they were birds they only quarrelled during the season of their love affairs. But now they dispute all the time; they pick quarrels with each other in summer as well as in winter. How greatly

have they fallen from that peaceful majesty which made the assembly of the penguins look like the Senate of a wise republic!

"Look towards Surelle, Bulloch, my son. In yonder pleasant valley a dozen men penguins are busy knocking each other down with the spades and picks that they might employ better in tilling the ground. The women, still more cruel than the men, are tearing their opponents' faces with their nails. Alas! Bulloch, my son, why are they murdering each other in this way?"

"From a spirit of fellowship, father, and through forethought for the future," answered Bulloch. "For man is essentially provident and sociable. Such is his character and it is impossible to imagine it apart from a certain appropriation of things. Those penguins whom you see are dividing the ground among themselves."

"Could they not divide it with less violence?" asked the aged man. "As they fight they exchange invectives and threats. I do not distinguish their words, but they are angry ones judging from the tone."

"They are accusing one another of theft and encroachment," answered Bulloch. "That is the general sense of their speech."

At that moment the holy Maël clasped his hands and sighed deeply.

"Do you see, my son," he exclaimed, "that madman who with his teeth is biting the nose of the adversary he has overthrown and that other one who is pounding a woman's head with a huge stone?"

"I see them," said Bulloch. "They are creating law; they are founding property; they are establishing the principles of civilisation, the basis of society, and the foundations of the State."

"How is that?" asked old Maël.

"By setting bounds to their fields. That is the origin of all government. Your penguins, O Master, are performing the most august of functions. Throughout the ages their work will be consecrated by lawyers and magistrates will confirm it."