

Freedom

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Communist Kitchens.

"Let any great city be visited to-morrow by a calamity—a siege, or the like—and you will see that immediately the Communist idea will come to affirm itself in life. The question of 'bread,' of food for all, will impose itself upon the community, while the question as to the remuneration of the services rendered by this or that member of society will be thrust into the background. Every one's needs will be every one's right to his share in the common store of available food."

This is what Anarchists were teaching all these years while learned economists were repeating the bourgeois formula: "To every one according to his services."

Now, Western Europe is living through a period of calamity, and we see how the idea of Communist kitchens is rapidly spreading everywhere, as a first small step towards a Communistic conception of organisation.

In Paris, the Syndicate of coachmen and chauffeurs has opened their *Popotte communiste*, "popotte" being the slang name of a small restaurant. It is, of course, only a small affair yet, worked voluntarily by women and men. Their means are limited, and all they can do for the present is to give free meals—paid for by those who can pay, and free to those who cannot—three hundred lunches and three hundred dinners being served every day.

"But, shall we refuse a meal if a woman whose husband does not belong to our trade comes to ask us to give her a meal for herself and her children?" This was the question which the organisers of the *Popotte* had to ask themselves the very first day they opened it; and their reply obviously was this: "Of course, we shall not refuse! We shall say, on the contrary, that she is welcome. The utmost we can do is to ask some sort of assurance that those who claim a free meal are not impostors." And the result is that half the free meals served every day are given to absolute strangers to the Syndicate.

"Yes, the barracks! We know that!" we were told by our critics. "And if there are those who for some reason prefer to have their meals at home, and eat it with their families, how are you going to organise that? Are you going to send the meals to the homes?" And when we replied that the Communist kitchen would easily find ways to distribute the meals, the wisecracks laughed to their hearts' contents about these "Anarchist Utopias."

And to-day we read in the *Guerre Sociale*, under the signature of Emile Pouget, that even this is already done in Paris, at a widely known swell restaurant, Ledoyen, and this restaurant has been turned into a kitchen for the wives of the combatants. No less than 2,400 meals, consisting of the usual popular restaurant's *ordinaire*—that is, of soup, with meat and vegetables, all of the best quality—are served and distributed every day. A special room in the same establishment is set apart for the use of those women who prefer to come there with their work, instead of sitting in their rooms, where everything reminds them of their dear absent ones.

"But this is a secondary matter," the organisers say. "Our chief aim is to secure food for the greatest number possible." And to attain this aim the sending of the meals to the homes has been introduced.

Out of the 2,400 meals served every day, only about a hundred are eaten in the restaurant; the remainder are sent out. Motor cars distribute the dinners in the 8th, 9th, 11th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 20th *Arrondissements* of Paris, and even in two suburbs. The *ordinaire* is put into big milk-cans, each of which

contains sixty rations, and the motor cars rapidly distribute their loads.

This restaurant alone could supply, the organisers say, 20,000 rations every day. "Only send us demands, give us addresses!"

This is how life itself teaches the Communist lesson against which bourgeois journalists have launched so many criticisms and witticisms. The necessities of daily life, indeed, compel us to organise everywhere Communist kitchens, where good, solid food could be got, both at a low price by those who can still afford to pay for it, and free for those who cannot and do not care to beg their exploiters for charity.

This is why our comrades begin to start Communist kitchens everywhere. Yiddish and Russian comrades in Whitechapel, French and German in the central parts of London, have already organised such kitchens with their extremely limited means. Most probably a similar movement is going on in the Provinces, and the modest Communist kitchens will surely gradually widen the scope of their activities (labour enquiry bureaux, reading rooms, etc.).

Therefore, many comrades are quite right in seeing in such kitchens the means of remaining in contact with each other, as also the means to prove to the working men that in constructive work Anarchists can be *practical*, and even more so than those who pretend to be practical, simply because the latter stifle every revolutionary thought. A good propaganda of the Communist idea is already being made by this supply of food, and the communalisation of housing and clothing may follow very soon.

P. K.

SIDELIGHTS ON SOCIAL SUBJECTS.

It is, perhaps, a fitting commentary upon the usefulness of the diplomacy of Governments that the first anniversary of the opening of the Peace Palace at the Hague, which occurred on August 28, should have witnessed the European nations engaged in the most gigantic struggle the world has yet seen. In barbaric times those responsible for war had the decency to refrain from any cant about peace. There was a lusty frankness in their methods which might be emulated with advantage by our present Governments.

There is much perturbation these days when we hear the amount the war is costing the nation, but how much attention do we pay to the cost incurred in our attempts to maintain industrial peace? The committee appointed to deal with the Leeds municipal strike recently issued a statement giving the total cost of that strike to the ratepayers. We give two items:—"Expended by the Special Committee, £12,333. Sums expended by the Watch Committee to maintain the peace of the city, £22,771. Total, £35,104." Preserving industrial peace can, therefore, prove as costly in its way to the community as a state of war. When will those soldiers in the army of construction learn who the enemy really is?

Meanwhile it is heartening to find the Lord Mayor of Leeds among those suffering from patriotic mania. "One half of my capital is freely at the disposal of my country. One half—nay, the whole—of my income my country can have if required." So he declared at a meeting of the Leeds Council held recently to consider unemployment and distress. Is it possible this gentleman was an office-holder when the Leeds industrial war was in progress, and, if so, did he then give voice to the same noble sentiments?

The names of donors to the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund should awaken interesting emotions in the breasts of those workers who happen to be wage-slaves in the employ of these gentlemen. In some cases the largest subscribers are those who have during the past few years been strenuously fighting their employees' demand for a living wage. Do we see here tardy acts of repentance towards those who have been systematically wronged; or are the gentlemen, like the bad, bold barons of old, merely eager to square things with Providence with a view to an earthly halo, and a title?

By releasing unconditionally the Suffragette and industrial rebels who have been languishing in prison, the Government has shown an eager desire to buy the neutrality of these dangerous "criminals." The war is disclosing the function of Government in its true light, and we will hope that when it is over these victims of false imprisonment will demand why they were ever brought under the ban of the law. The very actions of the Government are giving away the whole case for Government.

Trade Unionists, not being persons possessed of malice, are now cheerfully aiding the Government in the present crisis. We find that local Trade Unions in Newcastle have decided to keep in benefit, without calling upon them to make contributions, all members enlisting in the Regular Army, or summoned for service with the Reserves or Territorials. Similar cases have reached us from other parts of the country, all showing the sheer generosity of the workers towards a