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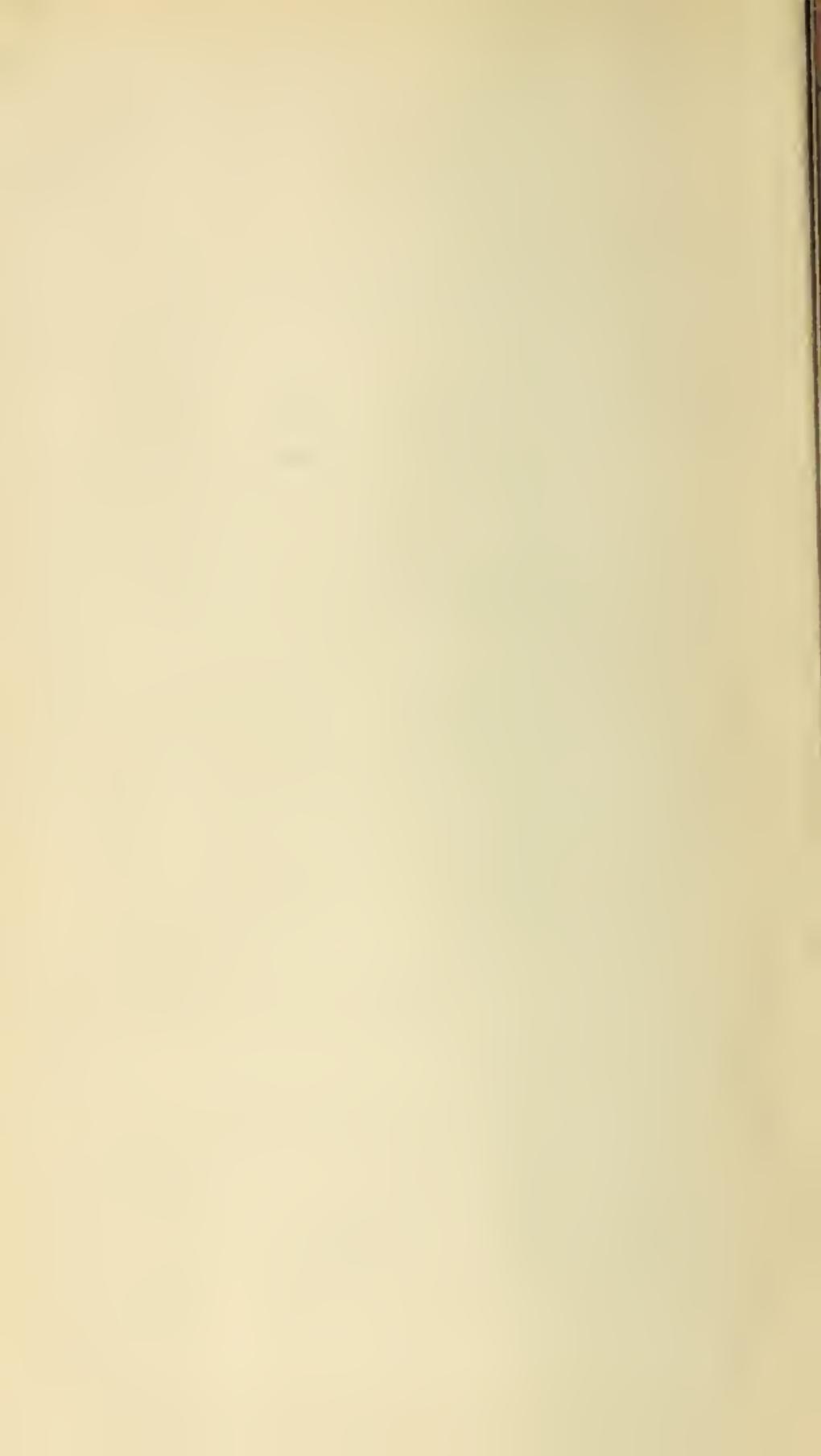
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Left Wing Trade Unionism in France

BY

PIERRE MONATTE
THEO ARGENCE and
AUGUSTE HERCLET

Introduction by GEORGE SLOCOMBE

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**LEFT WING TRADE
UNIONISM IN FRANCE**

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Left Wing Trade Unionism in France

CONTAINING

REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF
FRENCH TRADE UNIONISM

By PIERRE MONATTE

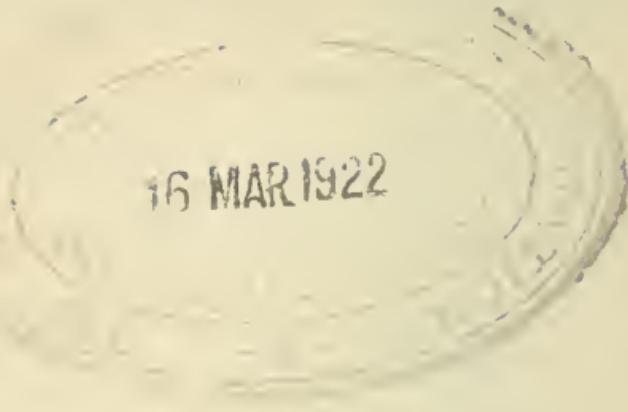
WORKERS' CONTROL AND WORKSHOP
COMMITTEES

By THÉO ARGENCE AND
AUGUSTE HERCLET

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE SLOCOMBE



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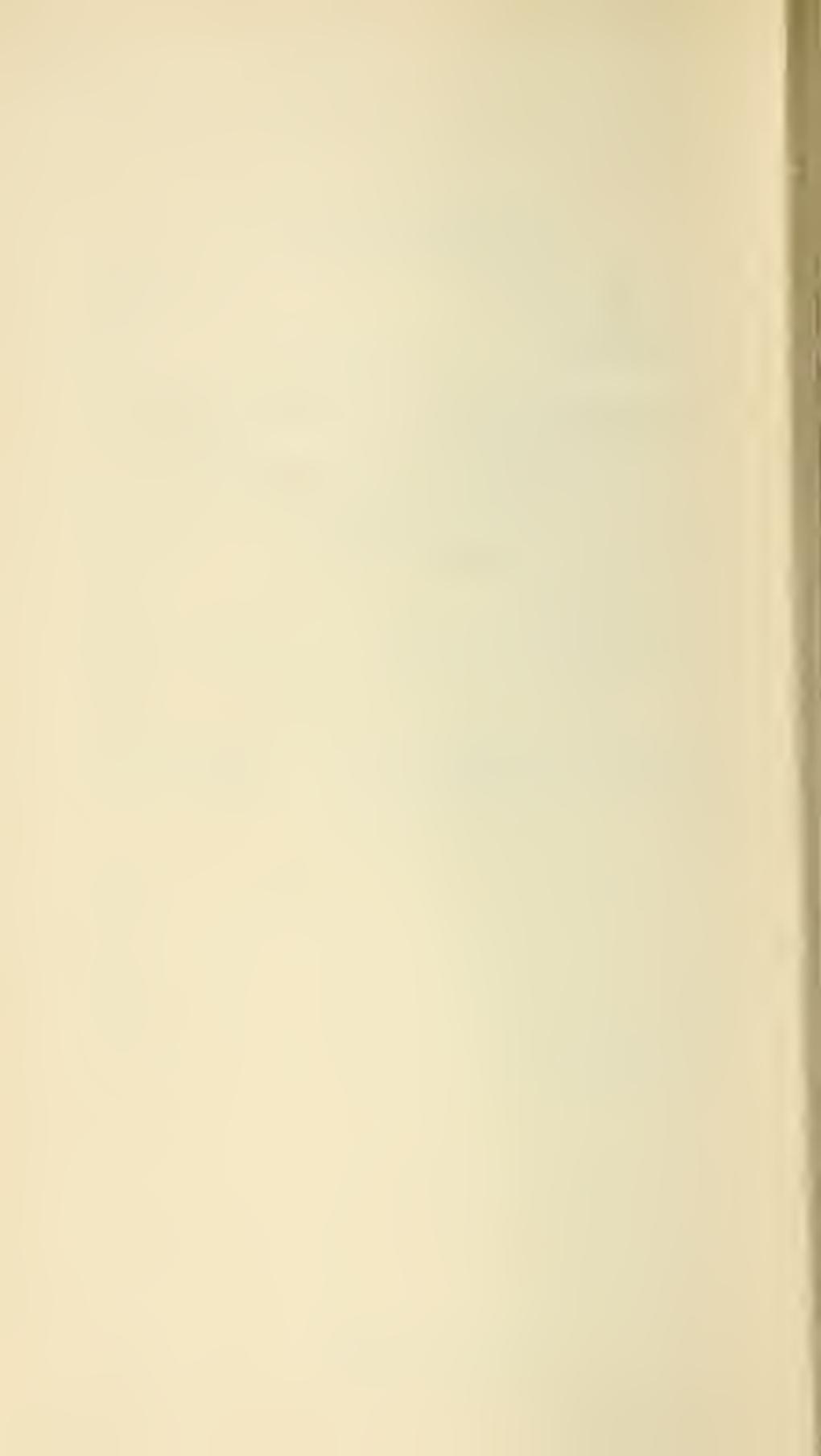
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INTRODUCTION

PIERRE MONATTE, the leader of the revolutionary minority in the French Trade Union Movement, is here presented to English readers for, I think, the first time. And through none of his own earnest and noble utterances could he be better introduced than through these wartime speculations on the future of Labour in France. Written by candlelight in the trenches, or in some noisy rest billet behind the lines, these articles reflect marvellously the serene spirit of this man who could so forget the present battle for the mightier conflict to come; so shrewdly prophetic they seem to us now, and in language so simple, moving and friendly, like his own personality.

Monatte said to me when I first met him—in a famous French prison, from which he

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conducted, for ten strenuous months, his paper, *La Vie Ouvrière*, the able, courageous and intelligent organ of the left wing Trade Unions—said with that earnest humility of his that is entirely without bitterness: “*You in England have done better than we. You have educated your young men for leadership.*” But I think Monatte has done better—he has educated his young men to educate others. For all that modest personality, so unflinching in the stress of oppression or battle, is sunk in the daily and nightly preoccupation of propaganda, or, rather, of the preparation of propagandists.

Some of the fruits of his brilliant if quiet activities in this direction are shown in the pamphlet on “*Workers’ Control*” contributed to this booklet by Argence and Herclet, two of Monatte’s young men. These writers, in a paragraph that should be—during the present unemployment crisis—very suggestive to English readers, advocate the *Occupation of the Factories* as a necessary fighting weapon in complement to, or in logical development of, the *Stay-in Strike*,

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which itself is a scientific development of the Folded-arms Strike.

These spokesmen of the revolutionary wing of the French Labour movement advance, in brief, the following conception of the tactics to be followed by an aggressive Trade Union minority :—

The General Strike should now be considered as a normal fighting weapon in normal times of peace, and as capable of achieving certain limited ends. But the times are not normal, and the mere General Strike of folded arms will often play into the employers' hands. In any such period of acute unemployment and short time as that we now witness, the only tactic for a class-conscious proletarian movement should be the spontaneous occupation of factories and workshops all over the country. And this occupation should be considered not merely as a means of compulsion, but as the instrument by which Workers' Control may

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*be established in industry even before
the Revolution.*

A new and brilliant chapter in working-class history was begun in September, 1920, when the Italian metal-workers replied to a lock-out by seizing and working the foundries. This pamphlet suggests the logical development of that dramatic action.

GEORGE SLOCOMBE

FOREWORD

I HAVE long hesitated to gather together and republish this series of articles written at the Front at the beginning of the year 1917, and published in the organ of our friends the teachers, *L'Ecole Emancipée* ("The Emancipated School"), which was suspended by the Censorship but immediately revived as the *L'Ecole de la Fédération* ("The Federated School").

For some years past the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour have considered it good form to speak of the organised teachers with irony. Some of them cannot forget that only one Trade Union Federation remained faithful throughout the war to working-class internationalism, proving thus the vigour of its revolutionary spirit, and that it published, in the face of all sorts of difficulties, a weekly journal of from sixteen to twenty-four pages, proving thereby its virtues of method and administration. The others, the renegades of the minority, cannot forgive the Teachers' Federation for having held out to the last.

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It was in this organ, which is worthy of our special esteem, that the five articles which compose this text-book appeared under my initials between 31st March and 14th July 1917, under the title : *Reflections on the Future of Trade Unionism.*

The first of these articles bears the date and place at which it was written—Avocourt, 25th February ; and the last—Eglingen, 15th June. I remember the nights when I wrote them by the light of a candle in the front-line dug-outs. No isolation or peace could be found elsewhere ; in the rest camp there was no way of keeping to oneself or of being able to write anything but short notes to one's relatives and friends. It was while my comrades slept and I awaited my turn for guard that I set down these reflections on paper.

For a long while I had carried these articles about in my head, but, jostled from one point to another in the Verdun sector, then in the Alsace sector, and finally in Champagne, I was unable to send my copy regularly to our friends in Marseilles who assume heavy but worthy responsibility for *L'Ecole*. I did not even finish the series, or rather the last three articles were victims of a commonplace accident—my haversack, in which they were care-

Foreword

fully guarded, got lost on one day of rush and peril. In vain I searched for them afterwards.

I had at that time neither courage nor desire to rewrite these articles. No more have I to-day; and, besides, the time has passed. They would be reflections not on the future but on the present. Let us just keep the first five of an unfinished series, from which articles on the three following subjects are missing:—Decentralisation and District Centres; Our Written Propaganda and our Press; The Necessity of a Revolutionary Trade Union Faith.

Jotted down on paper four years ago—four long years, each of which counts as ten—I wonder if these reflections have still any interest. I hope so. I make myself believe so. I imagine that what I was then loudly pleading for—a group for study and propaganda to supplement the work of the union—has now taken form and is in process of realisation. I refer to the C.S.R. (Comités Syndicalistes Révolutionnaires, or Revolutionary Trade Union Committees).

To assist its task of reorganisation and clearing away the Trade Union minority has formed Revolutionary Trade Union Committees in hundreds of localities and Unions. A deep, broad movement has been started; it

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has as yet run its first lap only, but already important results have been obtained. Big industrial federations like the Builders and the Railwaymen, large district federations like those of the Seine and the Rhone, have adhered to revolutionary Trade Unionism. To-morrow perhaps the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labour) will join us.

Will the C.S.R. disappear in the event of a victory at Lille?¹ Will their progress be arrested? That would be regrettable, disastrous. In my opinion, they should get ready to run another lap, as important and as difficult as the first. Their task is to ascertain exactly the inarticulate but emphatic needs of our working-class movement.

We have need of leaders. Who will train them, who will provide them? The C.S.R.

It is a defect of the Economic Council of Labour that it is outside the union organisations and dominates them from such a height or such a distance that it does not hear what they are saying and is not heard or understood by them. A real Economic Council of Labour presupposes and demands economic sections and commissions of inquiry in each industrial

¹ Monatte's Foreword was naturally written before the recent C.G.T. Congress at Lille, but his prediction that the C.S.R. would survive that assembly has been fulfilled [ED.].

Foreword

or district federation, nay more, in each union. Without that it will never be in a position to equip Trade Unionism for the control of production ; it will be powerless to fulfil one day the great rôle of a French Council of National Economy. Who will bring about this incorporation ? The C.S.R., either by encouraging the formation of these commissions of inquiry in their own unions and watching over their working, or by themselves fulfilling this function.

Our working-class movement has need of remoulding its unions and perfecting them. Nine out of ten of them have no relationship with the individual workshops, docks, shipyards or warehouses of their district. The union is ignorant of what is happening in the workshop and what is thought there, and the workshop is ignorant of what is being done in the union, of what is being discussed there and what is being decided. It is imperative to establish such a relationship, to create the Trade Union workshop delegate and form factory committees. If the union itself does not form them, they will soon form themselves of necessity and in spite of it, as in England and in Italy. Revolutionary Trade Unionism does not wear the blinkers of the older Trade Unionism and has not its short-sighted craft

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view ; it will apply itself gladly to this development of its organisation, which will ensure it a veritable rebirth. Who will bring about this reconstruction ? The old organism needs must be convinced, must be made to advance by pressure from behind, and in some cases, perhaps, hustled. There we have a new task for the C.S.R.

Here is positive and immediate work for the C.S.R.—remoulding of the unions, formation and functioning of Commissions of Inquiry which will give substance to the work of the Economic Council. In undertaking this task our C.S.R. members will become active fighters ; they will acquire accurate knowledge of their surroundings, their industry, the regime they are fighting and the ideas in the name of which they join battle with capitalism. The C.S.R. have therefore a great rôle to fill even if the C.G.T. passes into the hands of the revolutionaries, and more than ever if it does.

Having pulled the C.G.T. out of the ditch, we must set the engine going again, prove the superiority of revolutionary methods and at the same time revive the Unionist forces and give them back their fighting spirit.

For that purpose a great number of leaders are necessary. We have few, too few. And on this small number we impose a system of

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propaganda which wears them out rapidly, and prevents their intellectual development and self-culture. They have to speak every day, every night, at one public gathering after another, at meeting after meeting. Little matters it what they say. Suffice it to speak, to occupy the platform, to expend breath.

For pity's sake, let us speak less, less often and at less length. Let us reserve meetings for great occasions, when the workers must be faced with a duty to fulfil. Let us make our general assembly a real general assembly, where every Unionist shall be able, not to make a speech, but to make some comment on the subjects on the agenda.

First of all let us see clearly. Ah ! if all leaders had seen clearly in the matter of the policy of the C.G.T. that policy would not have ruled from 1914 until to-day ; its credit would not have lasted so long, and the harm it worked would not have been so great. All this Chauvinist and Reformist trifling, this democratic demagoguery, this so-called realist and constructive Utopia would have been weighed and estimated at its right value—*i.e.* nil. Themselves seeing clearly through the famous schemes of the C.G.T., how quickly would our leaders have been able to make the masses see clearly too. Alas ! the masses

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had more often than not only their own proletarian instincts to guide them.

The Russians have given us a remarkable example of method in propaganda. Before taking any decision they draw up their thesis in precise analytical form to serve as a useful guide to their discussion. Let us be inspired by this example. By this means we shall know exactly what our thoughts are and why we think them. Those who join us will do so with their eyes open, and will be less liable to abandon us *en route*.

Men act only when they are convinced of the usefulness of their action. Let us convince people. The noisiest and most violent are not those who possess the firmest convictions.

I remember that I addressed these five articles on "Reflections on the Future of Trade Unionism" to a friend whom I was in the custom of going to see on each of my leaves from the Front. He was then a miner in the Loire. I could only spare him a few hours, but I never missed seeing him. The train deposited me at his house at eight or nine o'clock at night and brought me back at four o'clock in the morning. We used to pass the evening and part of the night in talking and arguing, sometimes even in our beds. I remember well what he said to

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me then about these Reflections: "I shall never understand how you can write about our Trade Union Movement at such a moment and with such calmness; after all we have suffered, after all the harm they have done. . . . I should have thrown vitriol at them." He reproached me for not hating men enough, for going on my way without concerning myself about their persons, and with absorbing myself too much in investigation of methods of propaganda capable of giving new vigour to our movement.

As for him, he did throw vitriol at them shortly afterwards, but only to throw himself into their arms some months later, to become a close intimate of theirs, and do more harm than ever they could have done. To-day it is he who has begun the schism; he is the man who, in November and in February last, presented, defended and pushed through the Resolution to expel the Undisciplined Minority. You will all have recognised him. I mean Dumoulin himself.

In the meanwhile, the man whom he reproached for his serenity is trampling on the corpses of very many friendships and resolutely pursuing his work in the ranks of the minority.

PIERRE MONATTE.

June 1921.

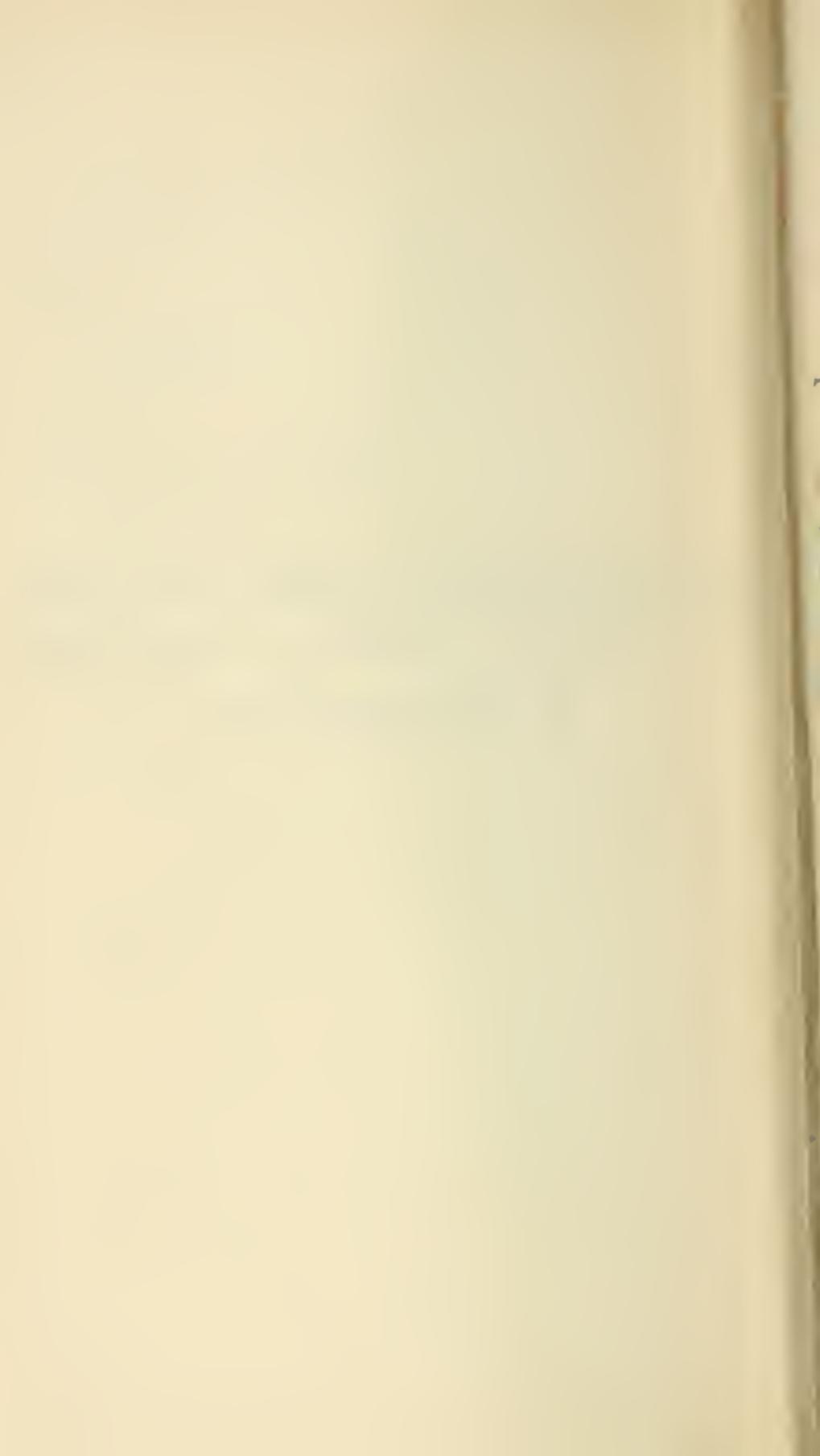
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REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE
OF FRENCH TRADE UNIONISM

By PIERRE MONATTE



I

NEITHER QUALITY NOR QUANTITY

THE French Trade Unionist Movement was not conspicuous before the war for the strength of its membership. That was a recognised fact. We used to console ourselves with the thought that while England and Germany had strength of numbers, we here in France had an active minority, and that the one was as good as the other. In the course of these two and a half years of war I have often wondered whether, in default of the quantity in which we were undeniably lacking, we really had quality. I wonder no longer. Little by little I have come to the conviction that we had neither one nor the other.

If it had been otherwise, we should not now be seeing so small a number of Trade Union organisations still on

Reflections on the Future of
their feet, and those, few as they are,
condemned to so reduced an existence.

Very few federations and unions
have put up such a resistance as yours,
comrades of the teaching profession,
men and women. Your *École*, if I am
not mistaken, is the only revolutionary
Trade Union organ which has been able
at once to remain loyal to its past and
to appear regularly in these evil days.
You can feel legitimate pride in that,
since its resistance is yours. Among
you, I imagine, there are many who
are concerned and anxious about the
future of the Trade Union Movement
in our country; not only about the
unionism of the teachers, with its
various problems, but also and above
all about that of the other crafts; in
short, about the whole movement
among workers and peasants.

The war will not last for ever. We
shall come back to you from the
trenches. Upon our return the pro-
letariat will remain the proletariat—a
little more bruised, bleeding from more

French Trade Unionism

wounds, that's all—and its part will be organisation, struggle, high hopes, and ours, necessities, duties, needs.

Would it not be proper for us forthwith to examine our internal problems, the questions of organisation which will face us to-morrow? Yesterday we had united neither quantity nor quality. Shall we rebuild the little house of those days upon the same moving sand? Shall we reconstruct our pitiful work without foundations, without breadth and height, at the mercy of the first gust which shall blow upon us unawares?

Rebuild? In most cases there will be no need for it; the house which was for a time abandoned will reopen its doors. Rolls of membership, volumes of official reports, propagandist pamphlets and reports of congresses stand thick with dust upon the shelves. Will it suffice to blow this dust away? Shall we be able to resume the routine of yesterday, renew the chatter of our gatherings and meetings of former times, publish

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again our multitude of little craft
organs as if nothing extraordinary had
happened in the world?

Not so. There will be something new.
Investigation of what we must do is
imperative. Alas! we have all time to
do it in. Let us set about it seriously
and all together, if possible, workers
and teachers.

That should involve a kind of ex-
amination of our conscience in respect
of the past and a search for new
methods of propaganda and action in
respect of the future. From now on,
if you permit, we will use as few words
as possible. Anyhow there is not much
to be said on this subject. In this way
the censors of *l'École* will be troubled
less, and we shall have the precious
consolation of forgetting the present
for a moment.

.
There was no denying it—it was true
that we had not captured the masses.
Organisations with reformist tend-
encies were no more widely organised

French Trade Unionism

than those with revolutionary tendencies. Almost all had been marking time for ten years. There might have been here and there advance or retreat: the building trade after 1906 suddenly developed an organisation which gave rise to high hopes, since then disappointed; in general the C.G.T. only succeeded in maintaining its ground. It had, perhaps, even lost ground in the last few years.

Whence arose this aloofness of the French worker from his Trade Union? From more than one cause, certainly. In the first place, I like to think it arose from the economic situation of the country, a semi-prosperity in the midst of stagnation—excellent soil for the spirit of routine, for narrow egoism—expressing itself among the working class in individual sharp-wittedness, in men rising to become foremen, artisans or petty traders, and in a complete lack of faith.

How many times since the war have we heard on the lips of workers and

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peasants a chorus like this: "We had grown too happy. Everybody was in easy circumstances. Only those who did not want to do anything had no work." Nevertheless, since class instinct does not suffer restraint easily, the refrain concluded often thus: "The rich wanted to put a stop to that, they brought us the war."

We must also blame the attraction of political struggles; the enormous confidence (tempered though it might be by occasional cynicism) placed by the average man in leaving everything to the State, sovereign, dispenser and protector. When a man believed that by placing a ballot paper in a box every four years he could obtain an eight-hour day, a minimum wage and clean and hygienic workshops, why should he trouble to work in the interests of a Trade Union every day of the year?

Above all, we must not forget our wretched methods of propaganda, unattractive and impotent to react against

French Trade Unionism

the poisoning of the public mind engaged in by the employers, by all the forces of the State, and by our great venal Press. Were our methods of education and administration well calculated to retain in a Trade Union even those workers who had already joined it?

What will be the effects of the war upon the industrial, agricultural, commercial and financial situation of France, upon the public's confidence in the fine State machinery bequeathed us by Louis XIV., by the political revolutionaries and by Napoleon? What moral collapse will be witnessed in all classes of society?

We shall know that later. I am not going to allow myself to give you my prediction to-day. We have no true grasp of the causes of Trade Union indifference, the roots of which go down too deep. The most reasonable and important thing to do to-day is to discover, in the fields of our

French Trade Unionism

present labours, those elements capable of being transformed by our own efforts. First let us help ourselves, and the invisible forces of Destiny will not fail to come to our assistance.

AVOCOURT,

25th February 1917

II

THE CLEAR-SIGHTED MINORITY

DON'T mistake me, my friends. I have in my pocket no scheme for the redistribution of our crafts among new federations, no miraculous formula for Union, Federation or Confederation regulations capable of bringing the working masses within our fold at one stroke, of winning all strikes, and of bringing about revolution in a trice. I will confess to you that I have not a single definite idea in my head about the possibility and impossibility, the advantages and dangers of a cleavage in the Confederation.

I want to speak to you and argue with you about quite a different subject.

Hitherto we have, I think, attached too much importance to, and expended all our fervour on, tactical discussions

Reflections on the Future of of secondary interest. Recall to yourselves the debates concerning industrial as against craft federations, concerning the replacement of local unions and labour exchanges by Departmental federations, and all the time we spent and lost over modifications in Trade Union rules, from those of the smallest union to those of the strongest Federation.

Nevertheless, I have been, and I remain, an advocate of industrial federation and Departmental unions, and I am not uninterested in the regulations which organisations lay down for themselves. I merely believe that excellent work can be done within the fabric of a craft federation, and bad work within that of an industrial federation. Examples are not lacking of industrial federations which have failed to achieve anything. Perhaps it would have been preferable for the craft federations in certain industries to have continued to exist some years longer. You change nothing by merely changing your

French Trade Unionism

sign. Nevertheless people are too often content with that. How many Departmental unions are in fact nothing else than the local unions of yesterday?

During the time that I was a delegate to the Seine Federation of Trade Unions, half, if not three-quarters, of the sittings were devoted to revision of rules and discussions in high legal vein on the interpretation of such-and-such an article. During this period the real task was not achieved nor studied. We were entangled in questions of form, and we allowed our conception of Trade Unionism to become shrunken and dried up. These questions were not negligible, but they ought to have remained in their subordinate place instead of strangling other more important ones. In brief, our organisations had become like machines which workmen spent all their time in tinkering up, without giving a thought to the usefulness or productivity of the machinery, once in going order.

Reflections on the Future of

The task of Trade Unionism is, however, clear and simple. To ascertain the needs and aspirations of the people, workshop by workshop, guild by guild, district by district; to translate these needs, to interpret them; to organise the struggle to satisfy them. And, as these needs will be finally satisfied only through a profound social transformation, it falls to our unions to pave the way for revolution, to achieve revolution, and to organise the new social order.

Our organisations are the tools for this task. They are tools fashioned by fifty years of working experience. They are what they are after repeated modifications; probably they will undergo others; but such as they are, let us take them; they are good.

The tool is no better than the workman. The generations of yesterday were not worth much. We all lived in such an atmosphere of egoism and lack of faith that all, even those who called themselves leaders of the working class,

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were impregnated with it. Among this number obviously some will recover. But can the spring, once broken, be really mended? Some, too, will return with resolution retempered and with an ardour long repressed. Will there be many in this category? Those in the van and those in the rear-guard, who have abandoned nothing and renounced nothing, will set themselves again to the task, reinforced by men of the younger generation who have seen clearly in the light of the fire; and reinforced, too, by many women—housewives, workers, peasants—whom all the accumulated sorrows of these past years shall have drawn out of their timid silence.

But with all these reinforcements it may be that we shall not be numerous. It is even probable. We shall be but a minority, at first minute and very weak. But before pretending to be an active minority we shall endeavour to become a clear-sighted minority.

Our clear-sightedness will be in itself

Reflections on the Future of an act. The light that is in us, and the light that we shall give out, will reveal to many workers till now alien and unknown to us the long road to Liberation.

We shall not undertake big things.
We shall do what we can. A phrase
in one of the first books of Jean
Christophe came back to me often in
my enforced meditations as a cave-
dweller in the trenches, and the idea it
expresses I have often seen again, and
always with renewed joy, in Romain
Rolland's articles. It is one of the
counsels given by Uncle Gottfried to
his nephew. I transcribe it from
memory, without guaranteeing the
exact text: "You want to be a hero
and you only make blunders. I do not
know what a hero is, but he must be
someone who does what he can. The
rest do not do that."

Ah, yes! no one, virtually no one,
does what he can. At long intervals
certain isolated and very rare indi-
viduals do. Hence the absence of real

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characters, of a real public opinion, of great human currents. We begin, through weakness and idleness, to deceive and stifle ourselves, and we finish by abandoning the universe to the wild beasts.

Feeble minority as we are, we will do what we can without asking whether it is heroic or not. In the first place, our minority will try to see clearly, to be the clear-sighted minority. In that is involved the whole problem of education. First of all, to see itself clearly ; to see clearly in itself and around itself. Then to help others to see in their turn, to dissipate the mists before the eyes of the people. To define what there is to do, the forces interested in undertaking it, the means of attainment, the difficulties to be foreseen and surmounted. To see clearly, perforce, results in control over oneself and the world.

“ But all this is generalisation ! ” more than one reader will say. Obviously. But have patience ! Next time we

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shall deal with the list of little things that we can do immediately, without breaking any bones and however few we may be.

AVOCOURT,
27th February 1917.

III

SELF-CULTURE

I HEAR somebody object: "We shall not be a minute and feeble minority. On the contrary, we shall be numerous, very numerous. You will see what a crowd we shall make."

Yes, we shall see. I am quite ready to believe it and hope the future will prove me wrong. But for the moment I do not know. Nay more, I have no idea. Yesterday many arms and many hearts failed us. To-day, behold, nothing is left! What do you know of the morrow?

Oh! if you count every brawler, every excited person, every busybody as a man of action, you may consider yourselves numerous. There were plenty of them yesterday. In these latter years all those busybodies have dis-

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appeared, but we shall see them again ; they will begin to come out again ; I hear them buzzing already. Beware ! let no one believe the task light though it be shared among many ; let everyone prepare to use all his strength, let him gather it up and increase it, let him become capable of playing a worthy part. And in order to play it he must first grasp it, must attain that clear-sightedness which we set before ourselves as the first goal to reach. We failed in it yesterday. Who would venture to deny it ? We lived hampered by movement, intoxicated by noise. At certain times, nevertheless, our vision was quite clear and we experienced the anguish of drifting.

About 1900 Trade Unionism had resumed its forward march ; but it stumbled very quickly upon great obstacles—employers, modernising their defences and not only forming strike funds, but undermining working-class cohesion by certain subtle methods of bribery ; a government on the alert,

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using an iron hand in a velvet glove: bribery towards some and repression towards others. On the death of Pelloutier, our great Pelloutier, in 1901 the Federation of the Labour Exchanges became nothing more than a great damaged tree, shedding every year a withered branch upon the road.

The impetus given to the Trade Union Movement, as seen more particularly in the industrial federations, declined after the failure of the 1906 movement for the eight-hour day, and died with the Villeneuve-Saint-Georges massacre in 1908. Then men and groups became torn by quarrels. Each sought to saddle the other with responsibility for the temporary check. Weariness overwhelmed the best of us. The ambitious, with hopes disappointed, became embittered. The weak and the dilettante meandered happily on. For fifteen years Unionism failed to find men, new men, to take the place of those whom Socialism and Anarchism had bequeathed or lent it, and whom

Reflections on the Future of it had sent back or tired out—men with a robust faith capable of standing firm in a storm, of overcoming adversity and relaunching the ship at the first favourable wind. In fifteen years the work of training and education undertaken by the Labour Exchanges, of which Pelloutier was so proud, had perished lamentably, there being nobody with enthusiasm to infuse it with life. The People's Universities had fallen and nothing specifically bearing the stamp of labour had risen from their ashes. The unions had failed to organise their young men ; they had not the foresight to establish nurseries for militants.

That was our situation on the eve of the war—a situation that we had been unable to prevent, well-meaning as we were, but with little clear-sightedness and with little faith.

• • • • •
We can say *mea culpa*, for none of us is without fault. Some are guilty of heavier sins than others; but is it not

French Trade Unionism

a very grave fault on our part to have allowed those others to act without our giving advice to the contrary, without raising our protest and without exerting any effort of our own? Had we sinned only out of laziness and timidity, laziness in forming an opinion for ourselves and timidity in choosing sides, that would have been no slight matter. But often we did not stop at that, we repeatedly gave bad advice, we lightly pronounced condemnations on certain forms of activity. We cast slurs on education; we gave no help to the few young Trade Unionists who sought it in order to improve their organisation; we kept silence when someone cried "Wolf!" at the time of the attempt of Léon Clément and the young men of the Seine to organise their series of educational conferences. And above all, were we those "passionate lovers of self-culture" we professed to be?

For all this we are paying the price to-day. Henceforth let remorse be

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our incentive. It will help us to get out of the ditch into which we have fallen, to overcome our mental laziness and timidity, our laziness of will: it will help us to escape falling back again, or if we fall back, always to climb out again.

When I look back this mental laziness seems to me incredible. Had I not to await the leisure of the trenches in order to read certain books I had been keeping unread for twenty years? I had not had time, strength or wisdom enough to read and draw sustenance from them. And yet I was one of those who did the most reading. But ours were diffusive minds; we wasted our attention and strength; almost all of us in various measure suffered from the same malady. In our circles we forgot the joy which serious reading gives and the strength derived from strong concentrated thinking. We had forgotten how to read. We absorbed our daily and weekly papers, and that satisfied our intellectual thirst in

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those days. But a deep need for learning, for forming and nourishing our thoughts, we had ceased to feel. The newspaper, as such, was largely the cause of this, though it might have been such a wonderful stimulus. From top to bottom of society it has killed the taste for serious reading. But can you, comrades of the teaching profession, deny that the schools have their share of responsibility? The method by which I was once taught English and German disgusted me for ever with learning these languages. Has not the method by which our schools teach them to read disgusted people for ever with reading, gagged their curiosity and killed their taste? The remark made by G. Dupin in his *Guerre Infernale* ("Infernal War") is very true: "The masses, in learning to read, had unlearnt to discern."

Twenty years ago the Dreyfus affair made us realise that in this country there was no public opinion; in order

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to create one the People's Universities
were founded. They are now dead and
the whole task remains to be done.
Who has not realised it in these sad
years?

The cause of this complete check, or
at least one of the causes and the chief
one, in my opinion, was the belief that
courses, conferences, discussions and
classes for study could form thought.
If you will listen to me, my friend, we
shall not pass whole evenings in rush-
ing from one meeting to another. We
shall pass at least four or five a week
quietly at home, in our room, *tête-à-tête*
with some carefully chosen book, *tête-à-
tête* with the best revolutionaries of all
times, *tête-à-tête* with ourselves also.
Before even the study-class, with which
we must supplement each of our unions
(though I shall return to this point),
comes, in my opinion, the book-shelf.

There is a book I should like to see
placed among the first on this book-
shelf. It has not been written for us
alone, for the evil it attacks is not

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peculiar to us—all society is afflicted with it. Appearing some months before the war, it passed almost unnoticed. It is *Apprenticeship to the Art of Writing*, by Payot, and published by Colin. The title is displeasing, I know, but it is inaccurate, for the book treats of rhetoric! Learning to write, in Payot's view, begins with learning to think, about which people concern themselves little. Hence so many babblers of the pen and the platform, of the workshop and wineshop; hence so many muddlers, in the unions as everywhere else; hence so little good work definitely accomplished.

Let us begin with personal effort, the bookshelf, serious study, meditation in the peace of our room, and you will see if these hours of self-communing will not make of us different men from the men we were yesterday. We can then go to the club for study, for we shall have something to offer, to exchange and bring away. But so long as we go there with empty and confused heads,

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we shall come back with empty hands and sick hearts. Let us make an end of diffusion of effort, of rushing from meeting to meeting, of precious time lost, of minds nourished with froth, of enthusiasm which fades before it has flowered.

IV

WORKERS' CLUBS

IT is a current error to say that our thought is formed and ripens about the age of twenty. In reality that takes place very much later, about the age of thirty, as a result of our personal acquaintance with life. But the war, for a certain number of generations to come, will have speeded up this acquaintance, advanced this maturity.

In former days numbers of young men were unable to extend their imagination beyond establishing a home and settling down in life. Revolutionary opinions merely constituted part of the ordinary maladies of youth. How many abandoned them? The number was enormous. In France the process of waste in our organisations

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was formidable. Like the socialist and anarchist groups, our unions were merely temporary shelters, halting-places for a few months or years; very few felt themselves settled in them for life.

I cannot think that the movement in any other country suffered from such a diminution of its forces. And the saddest part is that many serious and ardent souls—perhaps the most serious and most ardent—fell out on the way.

Someone who reads from time to time the little paper, *Der Revolucionner*, published by our friend Brupbacher of Zurich, told me recently that Brupbacher is making use of his army service to conduct an investigation into the way in which people become Socialists. He might employ his time to worse purpose. Such a psychological investigation cannot fail of interest, and what is true of Zurich may very well be true of all industrial towns; so any comrade who can read German

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would do well, if not to translate the entire work, which is probably lengthy, at least to give us a good analysis of it in *L'École*.

If I had known of this project I should have advised Brupbacher not only to endeavour to find out how people become Socialists, but also how people cease to be Socialists. In Switzerland the evil is probably less grave, but undoubtedly it is rampant.

Why do so many people part company with us? For what reasons? Under what influences? Yes, I know that in the universal atmosphere of egoism out of which the sanguinary tempest of this war arose many left us out of consideration for personal interests in order to devote themselves to the homes they had just founded. They did not see that in so doing they were exposing to the worst of dangers this very home and those dear ones whom they believed they were protecting.

That was not the only cause of our diffusion of effort; perhaps it was not

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the most important. There were others which arose from the character of our movement, from the feverish spirit which swayed our communities, from our habit of brawling and backbiting, from the lack of trust and comradeship among us, from the lack of serious spirit in our debates which led us to take decisions which we were continually incapable of executing.

Is it not easy to understand that at the end of a series of grave disappointments certain of the best abandoned us to our fate? And is it not all the more easy to understand because our ideas had simply touched them on the surface and had not penetrated their reason and hearts?

We ought to undertake a serious revision of our ideas. The hard lesson of this war imposes it upon us. But I am not disturbed; the foundations of our revolutionary Unionism will not be overthrown; on the contrary, they will be strengthened and unshakably cemented.

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But what a revision of our methods of propaganda must we effect forthwith! How much greater the effort we must make for education, and what importance must be attached in all educative work to classes of study for adults!

Hitherto we have overestimated the actual value of the Trade Union; we have confined all our activity within its bounds. Did we not confuse with the starting-point what will be, if not the finishing-point, at least a later stage of development? I can quite see at not so distant a day a vast system of educative undertakings grouped about the Trade Union and under its wing. But at the present time what undertakings have been started, developed and extended in this field? To-day it is bare. And yet experiments have not been lacking. Was the shadow of the union detrimental to them?

For the moment I believe in the temporary necessity of separation and

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independence for these educative undertakings. The internal struggles which have already broken out, and will not fail to assume great intensity once the war is ended, will impose it upon us all the more as a material obligation.

Of course revival of the union is subordinate to a vigorous house-cleaning; but the same hands which shall undertake the cleaning will have to put everything back in order and pursue constructive work. Those are two operations to be carried on together, the one as important as the other; they are two aspects of the same task.

The best group for Trade Union defence will be the true Trade Union class for study—a class for ideas, whose rôle it will be to bring together the far-sighted minority, to do immediate and far-reaching work, to supplement the union with an organism which shall serve it like eyes until it becomes its whole soul, thoughtful and enthusiastic.

Our classes yesterday possessed no

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great attraction. There are few which left lasting traces, but there are some. I know of centres where revolutionary groups, as at Nancy, or young Trade Unionists, as at Brest, for years furnished the Trade Unions of the locality with leaders. Many will recall, besides, the valuable series of pamphlets published twenty years ago by the Paris group of students — Socialists, Revolutionaries and Internationalists — a group which was formed originally by students, but which afterwards was open to all, and at the last contained hardly any students at all.

The classes for study yet to be established will produce results and possess vitality only as they unite a larger or smaller number of those devotees of the bookshelf for whom we appealed in the last article. They alone will form a solid nucleus, an active and radiating soul.

Let a half-dozen of them, of divers temperament and tendency, but bound together by the same desire to work

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for the emancipation of the people, resolve to meet one evening a week to talk at their ease, as among equals, to exchange information and impressions, and to oppose arguments and points of view, and there you will have established the best kind of study class. Its weekly meetings will be then a useful complement to the evenings spent at home with the books; the work of self-culture will there continue and complete itself.

Very naturally this group of adults will become interested in other working-class educative work, in that existing already and in that which is still needed, in the groups of pupils and apprentices, in the youthful element of the unions, in the women's groups and the groups of foreign workmen. Every age and every requirement will have its special group. The class for study would not only be interested in them, but would encourage, uphold and give them effective patronage.

Brought nearer one to another, young

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and old would cease to misunderstand and would exert a happy influence upon one another. There would no longer be any foundation for the reproach brought the other day against the young Socialists of constituting a turbulent element in society, and against the young Anarchists of indulging in individualism and heading towards counterfeit coining, and a repugnant caricature of free love. The best children of our young working class would be easily saved from those two reefs on which so many have been lost up till now—politics, by which those who have excess of ambition meet their fall, and individualism, in which founder those who have excess of egoism.

In the centre the class for study; about it grouped a series of educative undertakings; the whole forming the workers' club. Let us not be frightened by the material difficulties in the way of its realisation. They will solve themselves. Find the men! They exist, but they are scattered; they will not

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come at a simple call. Modest and suspicious, they will want to see that there is serious work to do; perhaps they will wait till it is under way. But have confidence, they will come, and you will see them, one after another, set themselves quietly to work. It suffices to make a beginning; the corner of the hall used on the first few evenings will soon be incapable of holding them all.

V

THE CENSUS OF THE ORGANISABLE

“**T**HREE is nothing to be done here.” You have surely heard these words; perhaps indeed you have uttered them. As for me, they have sounded a dozen times in my ears, and I am not sure that I myself have never used them.

These words hide the chief cause of our inaction.

When anyone declares that there is nothing to be done in his home, his trade association, his quarter, his district, that means that there is everything to be done there. Yes, everything, absolutely everything; but there is no one to do it. Those who should have inclination to work for and devote themselves to something have no clear idea of the task which is

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before them and do not see where to
apply their efforts.

Before taking up pick and trowel, you make a plan, you draw up an estimate. Without such preparatory work you would fumble about; you would tire yourself out for nothing, beginning the same work a dozen times, undoing on the morrow what you had roughed out the day before; discouraging yourself and discouraging others.

In the same way we have to measure out and, as it were, make a map of what we have to do from the Unionist point of view; and after that to find out at which end to tackle it and the best way.

There is immediate work for comrades who sit in their corners and complain of being good for nothing. Something to fill their leisure hours and even shorten their nights for two or three months. Work which will pay them handsomely for their efforts at investigation, study and reflection by the profound knowledge they will

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acquire of their surroundings and by the aid they will give to their community.

There should be in every professional federation and in every Departmental Association of Unions one comrade, several, a score, but at least one to write a monograph on his industry or his department, and to-morrow when the war is over Trade Union propaganda will be able to resume its march, without fumbling and with vigorous stride.

Monographs on professional federations, drawn up with the idea of using them as so many programmes of action, should comprise at least three main chapters.

The first should analyse the position of the industry, the stage of development it had reached in July 1914 and the forms of employers' organisation. Then would be noted the present influences of the war and the industrial problems which will be involved in the

Reflections on the Future of restoration to normal conditions on the morrow of the peace.

The second chapter should give : (1) Statistics on the workers engaged, male and female, by centres and trades ; (2) a statement of the unions existing in 1914, with the strength of their membership ; (3) precise and carefully checked data on the workers' conditions of life in this industry, on the wage scales (which are so often designedly muddled by the employer and intended to divide and split the workers into fractions and set them against each other), on working hours, hygienic conditions, diseases of the trade and rate of mortality ; and, finally, some working family budgets with current costs of living, pre-war and present conditions.

The third chapter should trace the workers' long struggle to attain organisation, should enumerate the successive experiments at closer unity in order to fight with more effectiveness, should show a list of the claims

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formulated from time to time, and should set forth which of them have been achieved and the enormous number of them that have not, despite dozens of years of patience and effort, and legislative as well as direct action.

For these monographs on industries a model exists; an example was set by Merrheim and the Metal Workers' Federation. But little inspiration was drawn from this model; this example had but little following; scarcely anybody engaged in this work or set himself to similar work in his own industry.

Even in the metallurgical trade, what difficulties Merrheim¹ encountered! One day he was accused of turning his back on revolutionary principles, he

¹ Merrheim, Secretary of the French Metal Workers' Federation, was active with Jean Longuet and a few others in the campaign for an early peace. He was one of the French delegates to the Zimmerwald Congress. Since the Armistice, however, he has been chiefly conspicuous for his attacks on the Soviet regime in Russia [ED.].

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who was destined to save the honour of French Trade Unionism in the solemn days we are now traversing. Whereas the fierce guardians of old formulas bequeathed to Trade Unionism by the Socialists and the Anarchists have lost their compass in the storm, he has been able to follow his route. This is easily explained if one takes the trouble to reflect. He had made an effort at clear-sightedness in his industry and he had succeeded. Hence he had seen the world heading for war, and had predicted it, had shouted it aloud, to the general incredulity. The events foreseen have come to pass; they succeeded in crushing him for a moment, him like the rest of us. But the light he carried could not be quenched; it was not long in shining forth in our terrible darkness.

The arduous work of Merrheim before the war possessed another merit; it constituted a revival of the methods of Trade Union propaganda, a revival already attempted by Pelloutier, who

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had been prevented by death from pursuing them.

A series of solid arguments, eloquent with statistics, was available at last to reinforce our criticism of capitalist exploitation, and at the same time the definite goal of our movement emerged from the mists—the acquirement and management by the workers of the industry and the world of which they are to-day the slaves.

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Can there be found in France fifty men, one in each of our federations, to undertake this modest preparatory work? Can there be found a hundred others to write Labour monographs on our Departments and our colonies?

Shall I confess that I dare not expect such an effort from our Trade Union officials of yesterday? Would that I were wrong in some instances! But let no one rely on his better-qualified neighbour! Let all who understand the usefulness of this preparatory work—you will see, they will not be so very

Reflections on the Future of many—set themselves straightway to the task.

Just as there is a model for industrial monographs, so there is an excellent one for Departmental monographs. It is the one by Reynier done for the Ardèche Department, published in *La Vie Ouvrière* and then issued as a pamphlet, thanks to the Teachers' Union in this Department.

This is how the plan of this second series of monographs suggests itself to me :

First a descriptive part, enumerating the industrial centres of the Department, giving statistics of workers employed, on the one hand, and, on the other, the strength of the unions, a statement of wage scales by industries and centres (without omitting an analysis of the peasant situation), the nature of agricultural ownership, statistics on farm hands and workers, with the rate of their wages and salaries, data on conditions of labour, length of hours, intensiveness of work, hygiene, etc.

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Then a twofold historical part, in which would be traced, on the one hand, the history of the most important industries and, on the other, the history of the Trade Unions, Labour Exchanges, and the existing Departmental Association of Unions, and in which would be recalled the great strikes waged in the past.

A glance at the Departmental Co-operative Movement, and its ties or relations with the Union Movement, a short history of the local Socialist and Anarchist Movement, reviewing what it has contributed to—or, as in some cases, cost—Trade Unionism, would form another chapter.

Then in conclusion would come an examination of the conditions which our Unionist propaganda should embrace, of the prejudices to be overcome and destroyed, and in the majority of cases an inquiry into the means of overthrowing the grave antagonism which separates workers and peasants.

Far from duplicating or contradicting

Reflections on the Future of one another, these two series of monographs, by industries and Departments, would usefully complete and strengthen each other.

As for the problem of their publication, this would be easily solved. No need to worry about that. Besides, we shall cover it next time in discussing Decentralisation and our Trade Union Press.

In a few months—if one hundred and fifty comrades are willing to devote to it the hours which their work and the anxieties of the war leave them—a census of the organisable workers could be assured, and a picture could be given of the conditions of life for our poor people of France.

If we knew how to go to work, we should have tilled the ground. The sowing would come as soon as the war is finished. One man suffices, in a barren field, to guide the plough; one man again to do the sowing. It is only when the wheat has grown and when it is ripe that we must have numerous

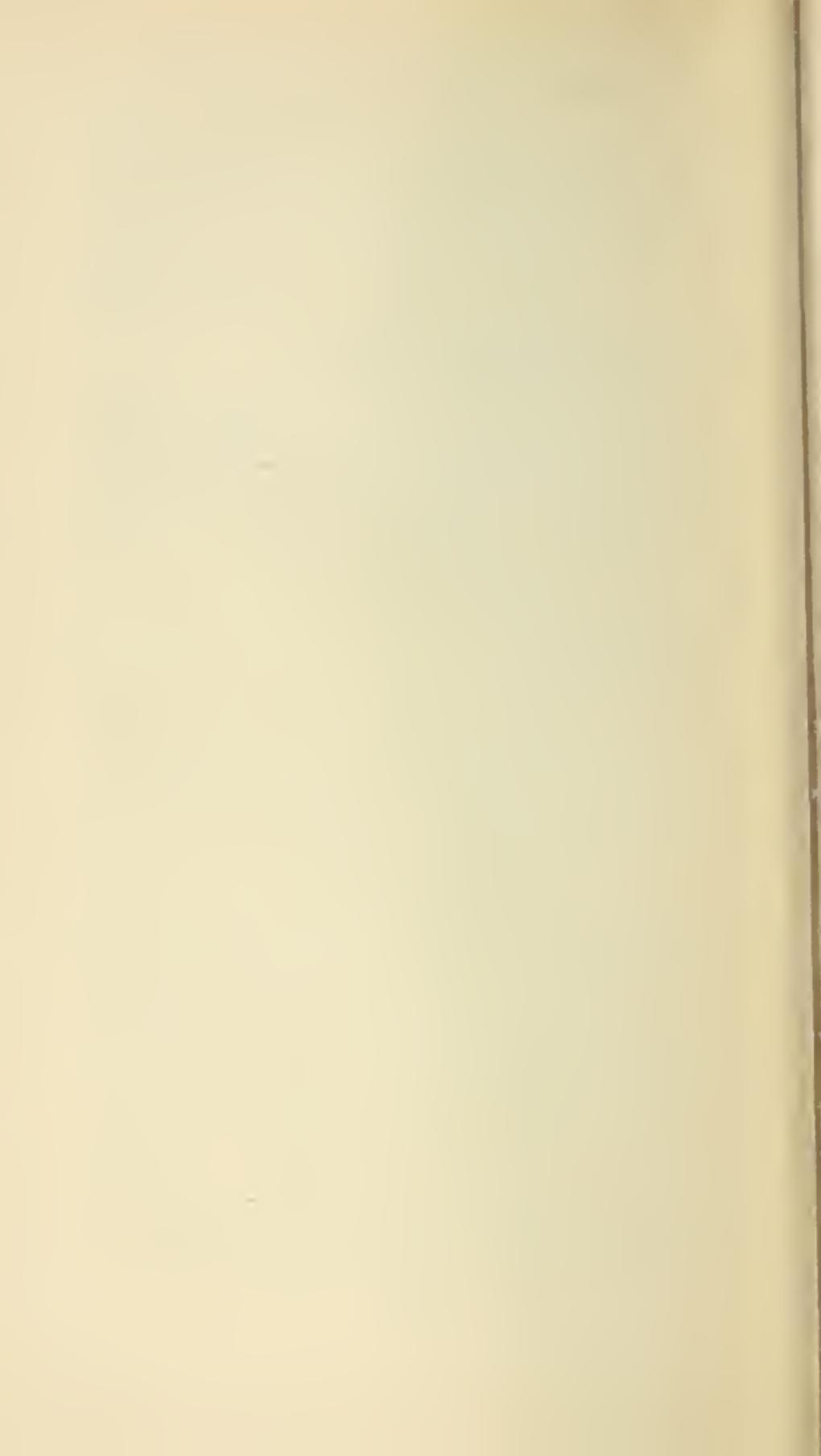
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hands to cut, gather and thresh it. But as our wheat grows, so confidence will spring from the earth and grow quickly, and harvester will not be lacking. Those most incredulous yesterday will be among the most ardent.

The problem is to find labourers who, in the icy atmosphere of indifference, will trace the first furrows and prepare the ground. We know they exist. Will our call for help reach them?

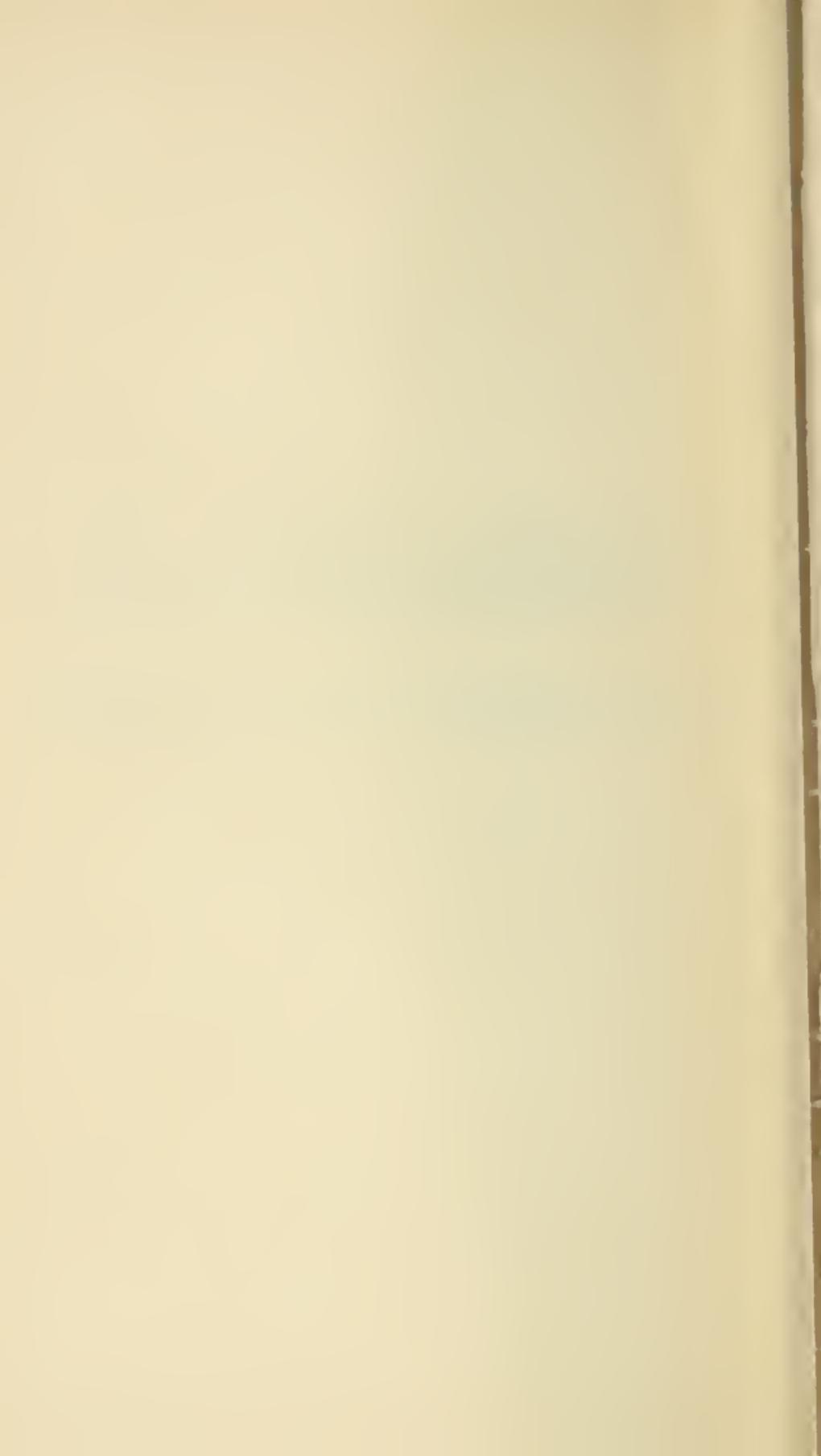
EGLINGEN,

15th June 1917.



WORKERS' CONTROL AND WORKSHOP COMMITTEES

By
THÉO ARGENCE & AUGUSTE HERCLET



WORKERS' CONTROL AND WORKSHOP COMMITTEES

CHAPTER I

IN what sense do we understand reforms, and in what measure are we more revolutionary than the reformists? This problem has long been causing confusion in the Union Movement, a confusion which must go if we want, if not to agree with each other, at least to understand each other. Reformists, revolutionaries—these are the qualities we attribute to one another, or the epithets we fling at one another's heads. But we wish to treat the question from the point of view of Trade Unionism only.

Can Trade Unionism avoid being reformist?—that is to say, can it, in existing society, withhold interest from the working advantages being gained by the workers? Obviously not; for that

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would not be Trade Unionism, and the Unions would be nothing more or less than a party working on economic lines.

But ought it to be satisfied with these reforms? No again; for it is impossible to consider Trade Unionism only as a means of betterment or at least of working defence—as a system destined to maintain the equilibrium between wages and the cost of living.

Trade Unionism, as thus conceived, would merely be an institution necessary to capitalist society undertaking to correct its mistakes, repair its failures and deaden the blows dealt by it daily to the producing class. In short, it would be the most certain safeguard of the present exploitation of man by man. An organisation for proletarian defence, it would be no more than a necessary counter-weight; it would serve as a constant reminder to capitalists and governments not to exceed certain limits of exploitation and authority under risk of provoking a revolt of the people when their

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misery becomes insupportable. It is quite natural that the bourgeoisie, the capitalists and the governments, having realised the value of preserving the social order, should form their own specious conception of Trade Unionism.

It was just in that way, indeed, that the authors of the law of 1884, which gave legal existence to Trade Unions in France, conceived it.

The authors of the law of 1884 have lost none of their hopes ; we might even say without fear of contradiction that they have realised the greater part of them. They count on Trade Unionism continuing to be the legal opposition they desire, arresting and preventing abuses of capitalism without, however, menacing its existence.

Trade Unionism would constitute, if it remained within the limits of action fixed by law, an institution for the preservation of society, a necessity of government.

Who among those Trade Unionists of the reformist majority have realised

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the rôle which they are now playing, and which G. Sorel was one of the first to denounce? Trade Unionism cannot be merely reformist. While working for immediate improvements which may be called reforms, it must likewise work for a profound social transformation, it must be revolutionary to avoid being conservative. In consequence, if it must work day in and day out to improve to the utmost the lot of the proletariat, it must not forget for a single moment that its real end is Revolution. We are, then, in accord with those who work within the Trade Unions on reformist lines, but we are against them from the moment we consider the reforms they advocate are liable to prolong capitalist exploitation; we are against them when their reforms serve simply to patch up the old bourgeois structure.

We are partisans of the reforms which *improve* the lot of the working class; but we declare ourselves adversaries of the reforms which can only

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benefit capitalism. We know that what have been hitherto called improvements in the worker's daily lot are only and can only be *temporary* improvements; we know that the employer needs only a few weeks to re-establish the equilibrium which has been for a moment broken by the concession, for example, of an improvement in wages. An increase in selling price and the equilibrium is re-established to the advantage of the employer and to the detriment, naturally, of the consumer, of the worker.

Trade Unionism cannot for ever revolve in this circle and would be stupid not to be revolutionary; it must seek to suppress the causes of misery, of exploitation—in a word, Capitalism. If it is agreed that we are working for the total disappearance of the employer and his derivative, the wage-earner, it is equally agreed that we cannot advocate any reform or reforms which sanction capitalistic exploitation by consolidating it. On the other hand,

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we are determined to uphold every scheme of reform which, as we have said, would really improve the lot of the producers, would consolidate nothing in the actual regime which we are fighting, and which would be a direct attack on the principle of private property and pave the way for complete economic emancipation.

In this study we have to define our conception of workers' control. This conception, to meet our requirements, must fulfil the conditions referred to above. But if we accept a system of workers' control giving us revolutionary guarantees, we reject categorically the form of workers' control (*sic*) which would effect in every factory a close collaboration between the producers and their exploiter by the organisation of intensive production, by the application of Trade Union discipline to the workshop, to the sole benefit of the capitalist.

It is inconceivable that by conscious or unconscious agreement with the

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management Trade Union workers should sanction their own exploitation and give the seal of working-class legality to a system of production for the personal profit of the owners, a system which it is of necessity their mission to fight. They cannot bestow on the owners the benefits of collective management on technical questions as well as questions of discipline. We do not want control of production, with or without consent of the owners, to mean organisation of production in accord with the management and to the sole profit of Capital.

Trade Unionism, *which goes from legality to illegality*, is certainly the only serious force, the only economically revolutionary power which faces Capitalism and the authority of the State, and which gives them cause for tremendous anxiety. It is undeniable that the class struggle, by direct action or illegal action, is the only useful action for those who would pave the way for Revolution, for those who would en-

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force a serious claim; and it is evident, on the other hand, that everything which tends to harmonise the two opposing parties, Trade Unionism and Capitalism, is essentially conservative.

- ✓ To maintain the class spirit in the proletariat is a necessity, since the daily exploitation which it suffers is not sufficient to overcome its attitude of resignation. In view of the results obtained to date, there is no doubt that the mass of the workers has not yet conceived even vaguely the organisation of a new society. Communism is something afar off which it does not even try to comprehend.

It is certain that the leaders will not make Communism intelligible by a simple theoretical exposition. But by fresh facts and by appropriate methods the working class will realise its capacity for managing and directing and its power of organisation.

The federations of industries, the associations of unions, and the Trade Unions already constitute most of the

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framework for the organisation of production and distribution; but the workshop committees have still to be established.

There are thus two mutually hostile forces each capable of management and organisation — Capitalism and Trade Unionism. To enable the latter to overcome the former, it must have power developing more quickly than that of Capitalism, and must cease to abide by legality under penalty, as we have stated, of becoming nothing more than an organ of Government.

A regime is not overthrown if its own limits of action are accepted. A regime established by force, which maintains itself by force alone, is not overthrown by the employment of gentle methods and collaborating with it, nor yet by employing against it methods only capable of making it accept a few innocent reforms without lasting advantage, and which in consequence can only perpetuate the established order of things.

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Our movement must be destructive and at the same time constructive; and always revolutionary, because it opposes in all its activities the management and authority of the owners. There we have a programme for our Trade Unionism.

- ✓ To make the working class realise its possibilities for managing, organising, directing and producing is to do the work of a revolutionary, is to do destructive work; for before the proletariat can undertake to destroy, it must know what it will put in the place of that which it will abolish.¹

¹ G. Sorel in his *Reflections on Violence*, p. 300, quotes a circular addressed to all police prefects by Waldeck-Rousseau, on 25th August 1884, in which he asked them to make their way adroitly into Trade Union organisations, and recommended them to avoid exciting mistrust and prepare themselves to play the rôle of devoted and disinterested counsellors and collaborators. This rôle, which tends to give guidance to the Trade Unions, directly or indirectly, is still being played by Police Prefects, Labour Inspectors and Ministers. They are playing it better, and more extensively, than ever.

CHAPTER II

FOR some time there has been much talk about the working class's rights of control over production and its qualifications for management. Employers, grown a trifle democratic, are declaring themselves ready to recognise as belonging to the workers a right other than that rather too elementary one of always producing for others without knowing either why or how they produce. Nevertheless these "enlightened" employers only constitute a very feeble minority.

"Labour's hour has struck," M. Clemenceau said to our Secretaries of the General Confederation of Labour. But the authority of the man who preached "all for the war" did not suffice to convince the vast majority of capitalists, factory-owners and contractors, who display no disposition to

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abandon the least of their privileges. It is a great pity for all these gentlemen that the working class feels in itself an imperious need to show what it wants and what it can do in the field of economy. If in business enterprises, in the factory and the mill, the worker figured only on the same level as raw material, if he could be considered, in his capacity as a factor of production, as a mere machine or tool, all would be well—Capitalism would then be the undisputed master it has always been and proposes to be always.

But alas! workers, manual and intellectual, are endowed with reason. They have themselves penetrated into the labyrinths of political economy. They have come out, if not imbued with knowledge, at least firmly convinced of the predominance of their rôle. Despite all the cleverness of our orthodox economists and our university professors in masking simple truths, once these are stripped of all the arguers' casuistry, the workers assert their claim

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to all the riches they produce and to all tools or raw materials which serve production, without recognising the necessity of establishing any distinctions among men who share the same need of living.

“Labour’s hour has struck.” Evidently—but how many ears remain deaf to this perfectly harmless declaration, and that in the face of so grave a struggle! A grave struggle, yes, but however grave it may be, a solution must come before long. On this solution we may say without exaggeration depends the economic equilibrium of the world. Undoubtedly it is possible to postpone the complete solution for some time to come by sacrificing certain of those monstrous privileges which weigh heavily upon the world of Labour. But peace will only be restored for a very short time. The possessing class by throwing over ballast cannot avert the fall of a regime not only unjust, but containing in itself the elements of its own decomposition.

Efforts have constantly been made,

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with more or less frankness and for ends less honest than declarable, to interest the working class in the problem of Labour.

By the establishment of a Supreme Council of Labour, by the formation of Factory Councils, by experiment in certain towns with local Councils of Labour, the Government of some twenty years ago showed its anxiety to avert conflicts between employers and workers, and its desire to cajole a "class-war" Trade Unionism that was beginning to show its teeth. M. Millerand, then a newly fledged Minister, entrusted organisations such as the local councils with the task of "informing the Government on and also interesting employers and workers in the actual conditions and in the necessary conditions of labour, of facilitating by this means Trade Union agreements and general conventions between the interested parties, and of providing competent arbitrators in case of collective conflicts." Although, ac-

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cording to the decree which established them, these councils were to be composed solely of organised workers or employers, elected by the members, they had no success, so suspect did the need for conciliation in every direction always appear to the working class.

Thus as early as 1906 the General Confederation of Labour proclaimed the inefficacy of these various institutions which could serve only to draw a red herring across the path of the proletariat.

Another Socialist, M. Albert Thomas, also a Minister, was later to resort again to this *rapprochement*, this contact between employers and workers. In 1917, in fact, at the height of the war agony, he appointed workshops delegates who are to serve as intermediaries between the working men and the employers. Though invested with very slight power, some of the delegates played nevertheless an important rôle. Though a Ministerial circular took great pains to point out that the rôle

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of the delegates lay solely in the relationship between workers and employer in each factory, to the exclusion of intervention by Trade Union organisations, it is a fact that the workshop delegates were everywhere active Trade Unionists ; and it must be said in their praise that a good number of them knew how to give their propaganda, even in the workshop, a genuinely Trade Union character.

These delegates were appointed almost everywhere in factories and workshops which were working for the so-called National Defence, but principally in the iron and steel works. M. Albert Thomas, shrewd Minister of Munitions as he was, had perceived indeed that these delegates, by discussion with employers on the outbreak of internal disputes, would nine times out of ten find a solution for the dispute, to the great satisfaction of everybody, if these disputes were not of a nature involving over-critical questions.

In this manner numerous and irritat-

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ing disputes were settled—petty affairs causing animosity between worker and employer—and production, being the better maintained, was intensified. But, on the other hand, it was easy for these delegates to give their daily mediation a propagandist character, the moral benefit of which accrued to the Trade Union; they were able at their ease (because they were recognised officially, as one might say) to conduct their pacifist propaganda, then already identified with the Minority.

The strikes in the metallurgical industries of Paris, and the strikes of May 1918, which coincided with the Minority Congress of Saint-Étienne, revealed workshop delegates in the rôle of active exponents of the principles of the Zimmerwald Congress, but alas! these exponents abandoned at the most critical moment by those who had laboriously set them up, and who should have, at the least, remained with them. The leading rôle played by the workshop delegates in this struggle

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of uncorrupted Trade Unionism against the criminal war policy of the secretaries of our General Confederation of Labour and against the war itself was so evident that most of them were removed from the factories and sent to the Front, sometimes even into regiments under disciplinary punishment.

Thus it was that the idea of discussion between employers and workers on the conditions of work penetrated men's minds.

We see the *Ustica*¹ group of technicians possessed by it. M. Roger Franck, its general secretary, in his book, *Labour in Power*, declares the moment has come for the participation of the proletariat "in the management of business undertakings," and that by the formation of delegates' Committees of Control, workers and heads of businesses "will

¹The U.S.T.I.C.A. is a federation which incorporates the technical and engineering workers, the teachers, factory chemists and others.

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bring about the reorganisation of production and exchange."

A scheme of control corresponding to the views of the *Ustica* technicians has also been published by *Information Ouvrière et Sociale*." This should be read. Although the objective aimed at is not ours, it presents certain features which warrant attention. To our mind this scheme attaches too much importance to the need of greater production —by the introduction of new methods of production, by the application of Taylorism, and by rewards for inventions and improvements which workers may propose. We hold it a grave error to believe that for happiness to follow it suffices to produce in abundance.

Of course there is at present a dearth of manufactured products; but yet to-day we see all industries suffering from a stoppage of work disquieting alike by its prolongation and its extent. What is wanting, rather, is production responding solely to the needs of the consumers, and no longer determined

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at the pleasure of factory-owners or heads of businesses who think only too much of exaggerated profits to be realised. Indeed, if the worker had the assurance that what he produces belongs to him, there would be nothing to prevent him from producing more. The products which he would accumulate, instead of as now depreciating in value by reason of their very quantity and of being a perpetual and constant cause of unemployment, and consequently of want and misery, would constitute abundance and wealth, the manufactured product being incapable of losing its actual value, its value of exchange, and remaining always the property of those who created it.

Much more important, it seems to us, is the bearing of workers' control upon the *quality* of production. We may add that we note the appearance among members of *Ustica* of something like a systematic tendency to contrast the manual labourer constantly with the intellectual labourer, the worker with

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the technician. But these two forms of productive activity must not be put one above the other, they must be united. If knowledge, by the effort it demands and the responsibility it brings, legitimately enjoys greater remuneration than the work of the manual labourer, it cannot nevertheless constitute a privilege. And it is surely a privilege which *Ustica* claims for its members when it expresses its desire to see the Committee of Control composed of one workman, one clerk and two technicians. The engineer, the works manager and the foreman are wage-earners, like the workers in the building trades and the textile workers. Most of their activities are directly exploited by their employer; they are as often as not the buffer interposed between the employer and the worker; but because they possess some small particle of the employer's power, we must not consider them irreconcilable adversaries. On the other hand, the importance of the part they play in

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the field of industrial, commercial or agricultural activity should not breed in them the deep hope of forming a new Third Estate of intellectual workers which shall foist itself between the crumbling bourgeoisie and the rising proletariat.¹

¹ A passage dealing with Trade Unionism in Spain, Italy and England has here been omitted as having no direct bearing on French Trade Unionism.

CHAPTER III

IN the following pages we shall attempt a study of workers' control in detail.

Composition of the Commissions of Control.—To insist upon the necessity of workers' control would be to repeat what has been said on this subject long ago by authorised persons. We who consider the power of the employer, owner and contractor not only as a power of abuse but as a usurpation, we who consider that the individual or association which produces alone has the right to dispose at its pleasure of the tools of production and of the manufactured products—we recognise *a fortiori* the right of the manual or intellectual worker to control the enterprise to which he contributes his share of effort. There is here involved, moreover, the question of the worker's

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Wherever there are wage-earners, control can and should operate; the nature of the work is of little account—suffice it that the work is a form of servitude—and the composition of the directorate matters as little, be it individual, company, municipality or state. Thus in agricultural enterprises, in workshops, factories, shipyards, banks, shops, wholesale warehouses, the public services, arsenals, etc., Control Commissions must be constituted.

We demand that these Commissions of Control, while having well-defined and definitely limited functions, should be in the nature of affiliations to the Trade Unions. That involves no partiality, no desire to exclude anybody whatever. In the first place, any wage-earner may enter a union and in consequence participate in the formation of the commissions, and even belong to them. Next, we affirm only

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what is proved in practice every day: the unions are the only organs capable of imposing and maintaining control of industry; they alone are able to oppose their own power to the power of the masters. And we are quite certain that where there is no Labour Union there will be no control. Moreover, the history of the Labour Movement in the last few years proves abundantly that all that has been achieved in the sphere of workers' protection, insurance, health and security, etc., no less in jurisprudence than in custom, has been achieved solely under the influence and pressure of Trade Unionism.

To pursue another order of ideas, we say that the unions must advise, guide and instruct the Commissions of Control. They will be, too, the link between the different local commissions and will assemble all reports or statistics capable of being worked up.

Members of the Commission will be appointed by the ordinary electoral methods. All workers or clerks in the

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same factory, for instance, having been convened at the local Trade Union hall by the unions interested, or better, by the local federation of unions, its secretary, in agreement naturally with the Executive Committee, will submit the names of comrades considered suitable and worthy to belong to the Commission. One delegate will be chosen for each trade, and we cannot insist too much upon the technical qualities which the delegates ought to have. Length of service in the factory should not be taken into account, but it would perhaps be advisable only to present candidates who have been union members for at least a year.

The delegates will be elected for an indefinite term and will be constantly liable to replacement. If they should be guilty of misdemeanour in the course of their term of office, or if they should act contrary to the attitude which their rôle implies, they could be dismissed by union committees specially entrusted with such disputes ; provi-

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sion would be made for their immediate replacement by substitutes chosen at the time of the election, or recourse would be had to the electoral college.

Finally, the Commission of Control in a factory will choose from among its own members a secretary and assistant-secretary, charged with the task of presenting to the unions once or twice a month the reports and statistics which they have compiled.

Employment and Discharge.—The sole arbiter here is the whim of the employer. At present no one is entitled to oppose the decision of the head of a business, even though this decision should be unjustified and iniquitous. Nevertheless workers always reserve their right to cease work when an employer dismisses a worker who is merely guilty of activity within union organisations and advanced groups. This right is not always exerted, however, and in any case it is always painful to cease work when other methods might be effective.

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We reiterate a commonplace when we write that employers or their representatives do not always take into account a worker's technical qualifications for being taken on. They lay more stress on docility and submissiveness, and they have so many means of removing trouble-makers from their workshops—workers who are too conscious of their rights and always ready to express their discontent and act as spokesmen of the timid and the fearful! Their special employment cards, their records, their black lists and their written remarks on workmen's certificates are some of the weapons employed, weapons against which we are almost powerless.

Under workers' control, however, workers can be enrolled in the order in which they present themselves or send in their applications, by the use of an up-to-date record of all applications for work. Thus alone technical capacity will be insisted on and all demands satisfied in their order and

Workshop Committees in conformity with the needs of production.

Now an employer can easily get rid of a troublesome worker; "dearth of orders," "lack of work," he is told, and the dismissed man can obtain no more definite information. But here the control is again effective, since the Commission will be aware of the state of the order books; and in cases where it may be recognised that the number of workers no longer corresponds to the work to be done, a curtailment of the working hours of the entire personnel may be envisaged. However, where the discharge of part of the personnel is imperative, the various Commissions of Control in any one region should act together and distribute this excess labour according to vacancies available and orders in course of execution. By these means the causes of unemployment would not be removed, but its effects would be considerably lessened.

Wages, Labour Contracts, Application of

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Labour Legislation, Hygiene, etc.—Relations between employers and wage-earners are without exception either sanctioned by law, by contracts between the interested parties, or by habit, by custom, which has the force of law. And traditionally the employers refuse to recognise either law or custom on the pretext of emergency. We see proof of this at present in the way employers are reducing wages to the utmost, notwithstanding the wage-scales worked out and signed by the interested parties ; we see further proof of it in the systematic violation of the eight-hour day. Despite labour inspectors appointed to watch over its application, a law voted by Parliament is clearly powerless as law when the power of Labour does not back it. It is thus with all legislation ; the law remains a dead-letter unless it finds in interested public opinion a power capable of enforcing it at every moment—so true is it that a liberty or advantage won must be re-won every day.

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That is, indeed, the advice which the (employers) Union of Metal Industries gives us in its letter of 20th January 1921 to the Metal Federation :

“Either the law and the regulations no longer correspond in spirit and letter to what you desire at the present moment, in which case it is for you to bring about legislative intervention capable of modifying the text ; or the law and the regulations formulated to suit you are not respected in practice, in which case, in particular instances you can establish, it is possible for you to employ all the resources open to citizens for demanding the execution of the law.” In other words, be strong and the law is on your side.

It is so with all the so-called labour laws that have been devised for us and thrown to us as a sop. They are not enforced when the workers seem, by not demanding their enforcement, to ignore them.

In this single field the Commissions of Control will have an important

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mission to fulfil. A task of vigilance, above all. The Trade Unions and the Craft Federations will help them in it by furnishing them with texts of laws, Court verdicts and the various decisions which constitute Labour legislation—with the collective contracts which bind entire trades or industries or merely localities—in short, with all the documents absolutely indispensable for the exercise of their functions.

Control of Production.—“Every detail in the actual conditions of labour is absurd and seems to have been devised for the perpetual enslavement of the worker.” (Proudhon: *De la Justice*, vol. ii., p. 329.)

The worker in the shops, whatever the nature of his effort, be it of muscle or brain, is considered no better than a machine. He leaves his dignity at the door, not only because the authority of the employer requires it, but because his trade, his specialisation drive him to it. In our modern society, then, the worker is doubly slave: slave of the

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employer with whom he does not come in contact; slave of a specialised labour from which he can no longer escape.

And yet the worker is the indispensable link uniting a highly complex science, which, without him, would not emerge from the speculative field, and inert matter which yields submissively to his will. And yet in the product which comes from his hands there is technical skill and there is intelligence too.

The creator of wealth in almost all cases is nothing else than the manual worker. Machinery and the extreme division of labour subjugate him as much as they subjugate Capital itself. Not only does he not gain the fruits of his labour, but his labour considered in itself is to him nothing but an ungrateful and degrading task. We do not want the worker to isolate himself, we only wish the hand in the big factory to round himself out by the intelligence of his work. He who is only Number So-and-so, only the *n*th part of a numerous personnel, does he know not

Workers' Control and merely what his effort is worth but in what big work he is participating ?

Let us go into a great cloth mill and question some of the workers about their work. The rag-sorter will not be able to tell us what the machines will presently make of the old bits of cloth he is sorting ; the comber will not be able to tell us the value of the cloth which will go out from the factory ; no more will the weaver know the quality of the stuff he weaves. Oh yes, they know very well that above all this machinery, above all these men who tire and labour and sweat in the dust, in an overheated atmosphere, in the midst of deafening noises—they know very well that a superior intelligence rules. The big factory is like a big machine with numberless wheels, well regulated and docile; but could it not be arranged that some of the intelligence be diffused, or rather that some appeal be made to the intelligence of everyone?

Will the weaver weave less well, will

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the comber or the rag-sorter work the less if they know the part they play in the factory, if, apart from their manual effort, they are bidden to contribute part of their intelligence to the general management of the factory? Among the most simple souls, among the workers who do the most elementary tasks, there sometimes sleeps a surprising intelligence which ought to gain expression.

To this argument many objections are raised.

In every business there must be a head who in view of his responsibility should possess entire authority. This head, who controls the fate of the business, must therefore alone possess its secrets.

Moreover, the worker and the labourer have a well-defined rôle for which they are paid accordingly. If they consider their task too monotonous, too deadening, too "manual," let them employ their intelligence and their technical knowledge to reach the grades of foremen and heads of departments.

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But in our factories with their single authority the employer is not called upon to invite or accept the brains of the multitude in the conduct of his business or control of his enterprise by the workers.

If the worker does not seem to be responsible for the management of the factory, he is nevertheless intimately involved in its fate. Let there be failure or bankruptcy, and he is on the street. Let the business go badly, and he is condemned to intermittent unemployment. Let the products which come from the factory sell at an exaggerated price, and the worker, without having reaped any of the profits, is obliged to pay this price for them in order to live. Let these products be of bad quality, and the worker who consumes them is obliged to use them, such as they are, in order to live. In reality all the risks of competition and all the defects of manufacture are loaded upon him. Taking our stand on the actual conditions, we may say

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it is just that the worker with no capital in the business should receive none of the profits, but this principle ought not to imply renunciation of all that concerns the conduct of the business or the destination and sale-price of the product he turns out.

Examples are so abundant that everyone will recognise the justice of our reasoning.

To pretend, on the other hand, that the worker can escape the bad conditions of labour in modern factories by access—which is always open to him—to higher grades in which his intelligence would find an outlet, is to beg the question without solving it.

We shall not cease repeating that it is high time to consider every worker as a man who should be respected; a creator of wealth whose right, nay duty, it is to control this wealth and its destination; a consumer, finally, who wants to know the cost-price and the good quality of everything he produces and consumes.

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Thus workers' control in the factory—and here is its true, its highest, its finest, its noblest task, and one that touches the interests of the entire community—must extend over—

1. *The Entry of Raw Materials*, their quality and possibilities of employment. Hoarding and the accumulation of great stocks can be avoided.

2. *Manufacture*. — Step by step the delegates will follow it, and they will prevent bad work. By the state and nature of the orders they will judge the utility and morality of the product to be manufactured, and they will be able, if need be, to take all useful measures to stop manufacture of one kind and encourage manufacture of another.

3. *The Product and its Price*.—In general, serious business enterprises have cost-prices which are fixed not only for the entire product, but for each phase of manufacture. The establishment of these cost-prices constitutes a very complicated science, but one which is

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already producing very definite results. Our Commissions will have to establish these prices, or, in effect, to control and sanction them. Cost-price results from the price of the raw material entering into the product, from workers' wages, from the cost of equipment, from general expenses, etc., the interest on the capital being added thereto. But cost-price is not sale-price, and the difference between the one and the other constitutes the profit. Nothing can fix the sale-price which is subject to the law of demand and dependent on competition. It is arbitrary. It is speculation. Every manufacturer sells at the highest price, and this method leads straight to scandalous profits and economic *immorality*.

Wherever possible the manufactured product should be stamped with *its price*, which should comprise in addition to the cost-price a maximum and duly proportioned profit; above this price, this *trade-mark*, the product should not be able to be sold. In this way the

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product could leave the factory recognised as of good quality, marked with its maximum sale-price, and leaving no opening for speculation.

The complexity of such a problem demands everyone's attention. In these few pages we shall not cover all the the question of control. Discussions to which this study will give rise will lead us to define certain points; but it is easy at once to recognise the importance which attaches to control of raw materials, manufacture and the establishment of sale-prices.

Part of the work of the Commissions of Control should be, furthermore, the compilation of statistics, tables and charts which will constitute very valuable records by reason of their accuracy and fulness, and which may be used for all kinds of good purposes by the local Commission and the Trade Union.

It will be seen, the work that awaits the Commissions of Control is a very big one. Are we to add to it the problem of apprenticeship, in which the

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working class is apt to take little interest? If we leave this matter to the *bourgeoisie*, we run the risk of seeing technical schools, apprenticeship schools, professional schools, etc., only turn out candidates for the posts of gangers and foremen, and men no longer comrades of ours.

The workshop is the true school of apprenticeship, and the working class should concern itself in the manual education of its children.

Finally—and here we come to the end of this chapter—in workers' control we see something more than a simple claim; in it we see the framework and structure of a new economic regime through the constitution of these manifold groupings which could, if need be, of themselves carry on production, circulation and exchange.

At the base stands the worker, in workshop or bank, free and sovereign, and perfectly acquainted with his potentialities for production and exchange. Then there is the local

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organisation grouping several enterprises and also possessing data which give it knowledge at any one moment of the quantity and quality of the products on which it can count, and hence determining the products of which there is shortage for the needs of its own subsistence.

Next there is the regional or district organisation providing means of direct and rapid exchange between the different localities, which pass on their surpluses and call for what they are short of.

Finally, the different regional organisations are united by the same system which controls the relations of the localities one with another.

Thus labour will be freed from the heavy chains which it is forging for itself so long as it remains subject to the arbitrament of the employer. And men will be able to taste the bliss of enjoying in their entirety the products which they will create for themselves by labour freely contributed.

CHAPTER IV

TO advance a scheme of reform, of improvement, in our social life obviously implies the resolve to do everything possible to obtain its execution.

At a time when the incapacity of management displayed by employers, or their cupidity and profiteering, have brought us to the most formidable economic and financial deadlock ever known in the world, at a time when one class alone, our own, is suffering terribly from the consequences of a rapid concentration of capital in the hands of a few privileged persons, at a moment when thousands of individuals, men, women and children, in our country are reduced to the most frightful misery, it is natural, it is urgent, that we should seek to prevent the recurrence of such a collapse, or

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rather its continuation, and bend all our efforts to that end.

What are the means of which the working class disposes to enforce workers' control?

They are, first of all, the establishment of workshop committees, with or without the consent of the employers.

The first part of our programme should be realised immediately. Let us, in spite of the employers if necessary, establish our workshop committees, which will be not merely necessary but indispensable for effective and serious action towards the application of workers' control, and which may be easily transformed into Commissions of Control.

It is easy to see that this propaganda must be undertaken on a national scale by the central organisations of Trade Unionism.

It is necessity rather than theories and men which guides the action of the masses. In consequence, we ought to study the possibilities of action in time

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of unemployment and in time of normal production (if we are ever to see such a time again under the capitalist regime).

In the latter case, the working class is always in possession of its principal, most powerful arm, its natural arm, *the strike*, of which to-day it has tight hold ; for undeniably workers' control, as we understand it, constitutes a direct attack on property, since among other things it provides for public discussion of the profits made by the employers. Workers' control will only be granted by the capitalist class after formidable pressure through means of the general strike.

We have on former occasions expressed our ideas on the general strike, and in announcing our repudiation of legal Trade Unionism under Government as useless and harmful we declared that in our opinion the general strike cannot but be revolutionary and violent. We hold that without violence there can be nothing more than the legal strike of folded arms and that

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if the means are not revolutionary, neither can the results be. Capitalism can defend itself, for it has its own organisation, an organisation independent of Governmental forces. We have several examples of that—as in Spain, where the struggle, direct and violent, had its beginning years ago and is ever growing. In the country of Ferrer assassination of the workers' leaders has become a method of government.

In Italy, upon the first direct onslaught of the proletariat against property (a revolutionary onslaught in the true economic and anti-property sense of the word), we had the organisation of the Fascisti, who have made a doctrine of violence.

In France, we must remember the rôle of the Civic Unions in the strikes of May 1920. These employers' organisations prove to us that if we want to get results from our struggle we shall be obliged to resort to violence to obtain them.

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Even if the strike of folded arms, even though general, has been able to produce results for the Trade Union Movement in happier times, we believe, nevertheless, it has had its day.

Capitalism developed during the war more quickly perhaps than it could have done in the fifty years of normal evolution during peace. The methods of the struggle of the proletariat have not followed this same evolution, and we are obviously in a position of inferiority.

The great truth that must be proclaimed everywhere is that capitalism is becoming more and more capable of defending itself alone, without the State and despite the State, if the State could ever be against it. Our action must therefore be *ever more and more direct*. But the State remains the faithful servant of Capitalism, and we believe that it cannot be otherwise.

However, the movement for the occupation of the factories which was waged in Italy *directly* against private

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property proved to Italian and international capitalism that the State is *insufficient* to defend it once the proletariat comes to better understanding of its revolutionary rôle and ceases to be misled along the road which leads (?) to the conquest of political power (to the detriment of direct action). Thus the general strike will be resisted by force; not only Governmental force, but also capitalist force.

That is why it will be violent and revolutionary, if it is not to be a farce.

It is useless likewise to think of enforcing our workers' control by petty skirmishes; the general strike must not be launched at intervals of several days, but all the forces of Trade Unionism must be called out in the short space of a week at the most.

We have considered the general strike as a means of action in a period of normal production, but by reason of our economic situation (terrible fruit of the war and of profiteering) we think

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it will be in time of unemployment that the working class will rise to enforce workers' control.

In these conditions, with the proletariat no longer possessing its natural arm, the strike, we shall have to abandon the forms of legality in order to enforce our workers' control.

To enforce workers' control we must present a formidable ultimatum to the capitalist class: "Grant us workers' control under pain of losing entirely your privileges as owners."

If the employers refuse to grant this just claim, let us show them we are the stronger.

Let us occupy the factories in order to enforce the control. Let us affirm by this movement that capital has everything to gain in giving it to us, everything to lose in refusing it.

Occupation of the factories resembles the stay-in strike which was employed with success by workers in the building trade.

It is the stay-in strike rendered still

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more dangerous for capitalism and more
advantageous for our propaganda.

It is pure and simple occupation of
the factory by the workers in it, and
by others if need be, that we desire
to plead for. This occupation must
be continuous, by night and day, and
owners, managers and foremen must
be forbidden entry into the workshop.

To refuse to work while remaining
in the workshop is tactics which can
give good results.

But to expel owners, managers, etc.,
can give still better.

The beginning of such a movement
will be difficult; great difficulties are
to be anticipated, such as the forcible
eviction of the workers from the fac-
tory. We believe, however, that its
generalisation throughout the country
would deprive the Government of possi-
bility of action. On the other hand, in
the absence of a Central Committee that
can be placed under arrest, and with
the struggle extending over the entire
territory, repression is not possible.

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Further, general occupation of the factories can go hand in hand with the general strike in all the public services and in various industries not involved in the stoppage of work; the one will happily complete the other. We showed above what is our conception of the general strike.

In brief, in all circumstances, the proletariat possesses powerful means of action, their application is after all only a question of propaganda which alone will permit of generalisation of the idea and application of the method we favour.

Our friends in Italy understood this before we did and did not draw back on that account. Thus it was that the *Ordine Nuovo* ("The New Order"), the chief daily (formerly a weekly) organ of the Italian Communists, long before June 1920 issued in Italy this triple command :

- “*Educate*, because we shall have need of all our intelligence.

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*“Agitate, because we shall have need
of all our enthusiasm.*

*“Organise, because we shall have
need of all our strength.”*

Besides, occupation of the factories will prove that, at least in part, the working class has comprehended that expropriation of the capitalist class is the sole remedy for the situation.

Propaganda, in addition to the immediate result it can give, the reforms and improvements it can enforce, will oblige us to establish in advance our workshop, mill and factory committees ; it will demonstrate in itself that in the interest of the great majority of individuals Trade Union management must replace employers' management.

Revolutionary Methods. — When their employment is general and simultaneous, they will be able, if not to replace advantageously, at least to go hand in hand with the general strike, which seems henceforth ineffective by

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reason of the bourgeois anti-strike organisation.

Let us occupy the factories in order to enforce workers' control, let us occupy them in order to protest against capitalist negligence, let us occupy them for the sake of revolutionary propaganda against the regime of private property and in favour of expropriation.

CONCLUSION

WORKERS' control must be a real conquest. Undoubtedly it would be a very grave error to regard it as a panacea, and by its application alone the evils by which we are overwhelmed will not disappear for ever. Control is not a fairy dominion and its effects will be in proportion to the general education of the worker; but this does not signify that here and now it cannot give good results. Those who claim, and with reason, that the worker is not capable of managing, or, at the least, discussing, the affairs of the factory are wrong. By reason of his very work the worker is much more interested in the affairs of the workshop than in the vain and stupid quarrels of politics.

What is there fanciful in the belief that he who is called upon to take an

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interest directly, or through choice of a mandatory, in the public affairs of the district, department or State, will be capable of participating in the management of a business, mill, factory or bank in which he participates directly?

Nevertheless, this victory would lose all the value we expect from it if it should serve to avert the blows, to abate the friction between capitalists and proletariat, and if, instead of hastening the end of a detestable regime, it should ensure it still many glorious years of existence.

The working class, then, will go into battle for a goal worth fighting for, and with this very clear idea in mind, that between capital and labour it is a life-and-death struggle; capital, which is exacting an unjustifiable toll from labour and is leading our society to bankruptcy, must disappear.

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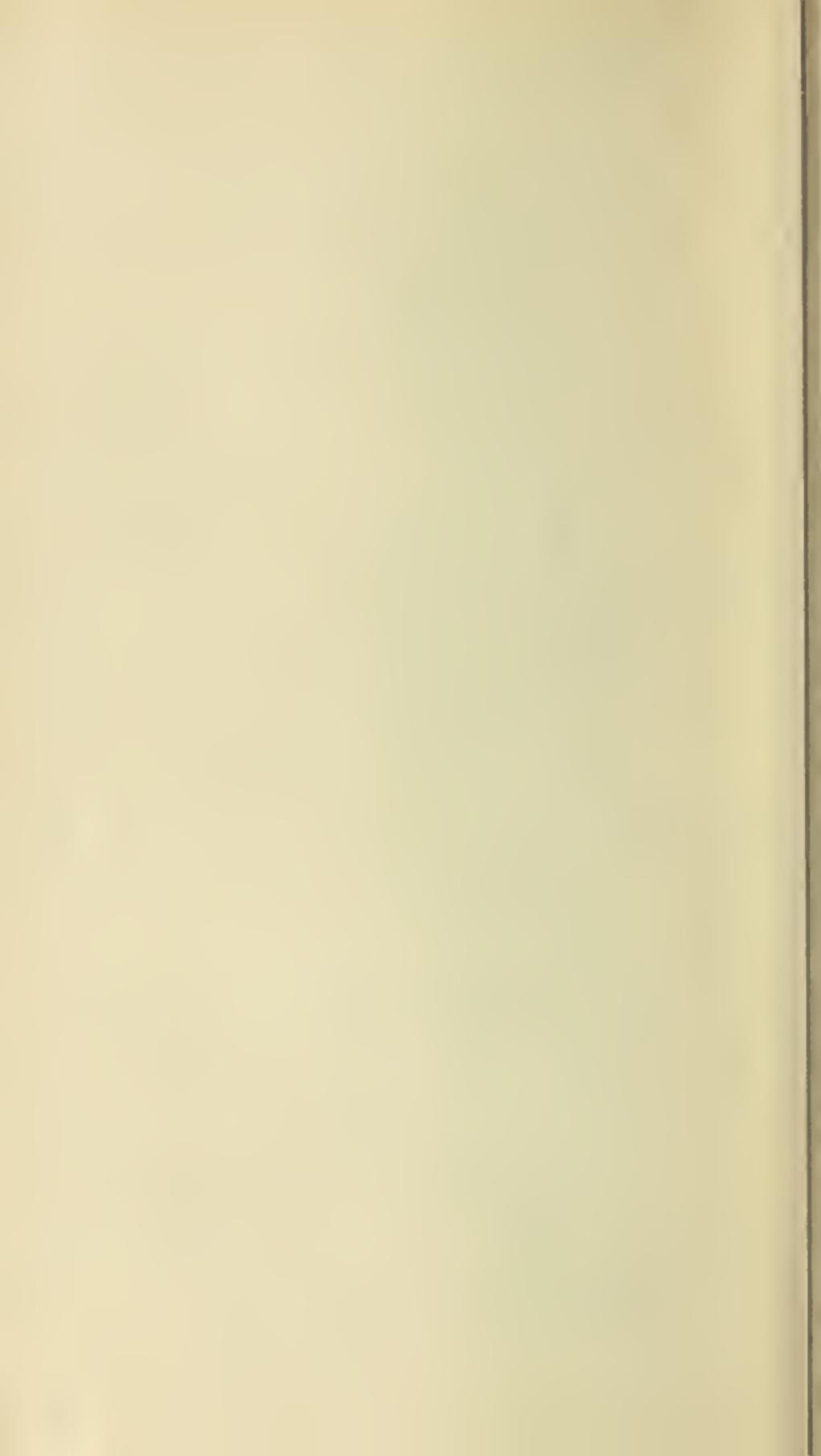
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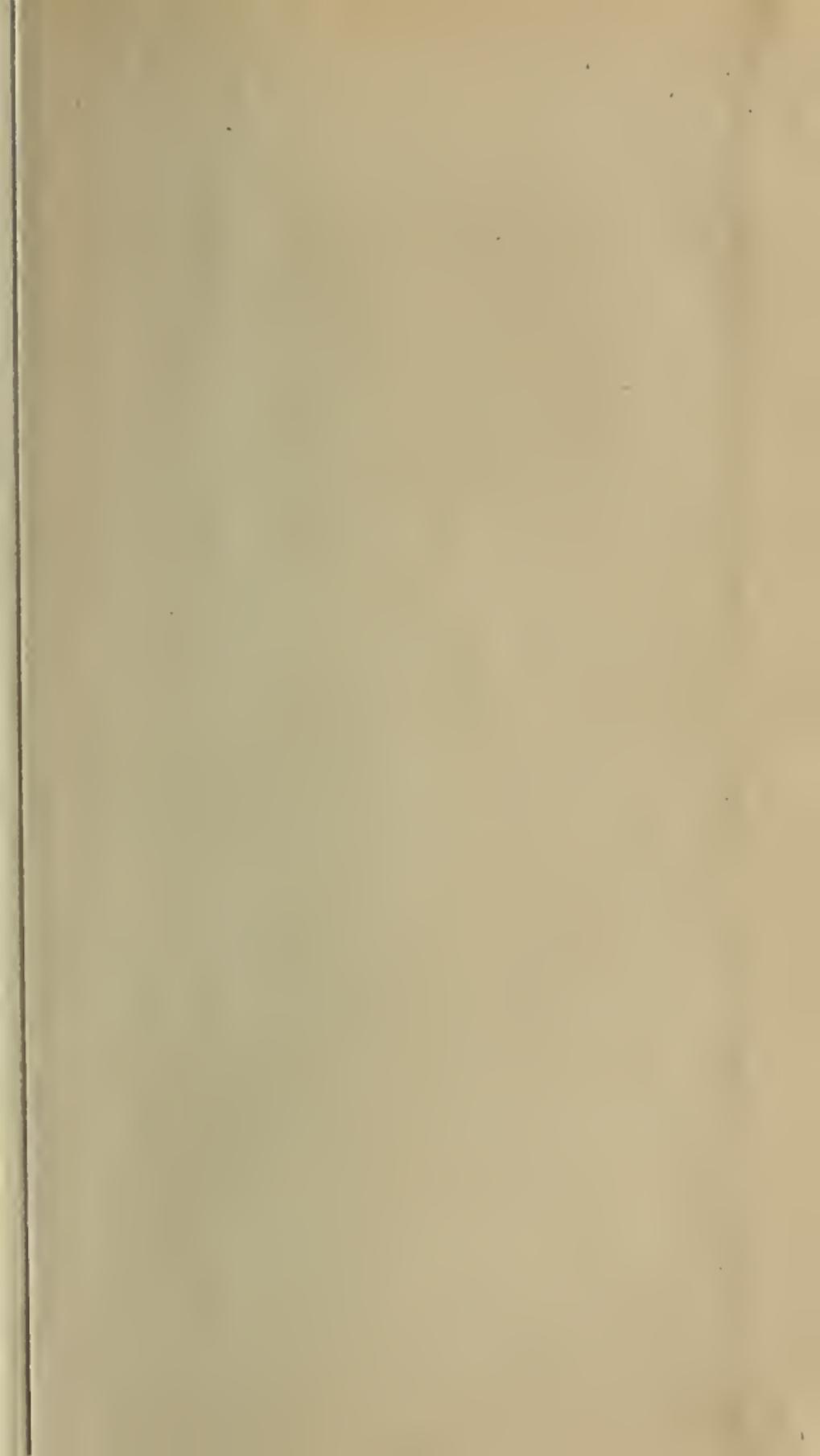
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