

POISON GAS OR FRESH AIR

support of a political party or group as in one belonging to a Trust, while a Government organ has no other *raison d'être* than that of a vehicle for thinly-disguised propaganda. Possibly, the future may see more of Governments as newspaper owners, even if only during periods of national emergency, such as strikes or wars.¹

But if legislation and public opinion be powerless to check the growth of Combines, the more intelligent section of the public, aided by those few influential journals that have still eluded the tentacles of the Octopus, is at last disturbed in its mind. Trustification of the Press has come to be regarded as a public

¹ During the General Strike of 1926, the British Government maintained a daily paper, which was conducted under the personal supervision of Mr. Winston Churchill.

STENTOR

danger, and as of still worse omen for the future. It is conceived of as a menace by the politician—always hostile to and ready to impute sinister motives to any journal which fails to praise him—who visualises the possibilities of all the battalions of the Press Czars suddenly being arrayed against his party. Its dangers have been perceived by the commercial community. Any Government which fails to reckon with the sudden conversion of a Press, yesterday friendly but mobilised against it to-day as the result of overnight change of ownership, personal spite, or thwarted ambition, is singularly unfit to govern, even in an age of incapable and hand-to-mouth administrations.

The malady has thus at least been

POISON GAS OR FRESH AIR

diagnosed. But the patient is not easily curable. The Combines can be challenged only by comparable weight of metal, and they are entrenched too firmly to render attractive any attempt at competition. It almost seems, therefore, as though the community must resign itself to Stentor, with his vulgarities, his inanities, his subservience to the whims and interests of his owners, and his greed for profits and yet more profits.

Given, however, a sufficiently aroused degree of public opinion—and here we are dealing with the incalculable and the unpredictable—and a remedy is not entirely lacking. One of the most characteristic and creditable features of the history of the Press is the great

STENTOR

influence that has been exercised in the past by organs of small or relatively small circulation and revenue, daily, weekly, and monthly. Some of these still exist, and although both their influence and their independence have largely departed, they yet stand as sign-posts on the road to defeating the complete monopoly of the Trust Press.

Courage and public spirit are admittedly required for a revival of independence in journalism, but the prospect is not without its promise of reasonable financial gain in addition to that of less tangible rewards. Intelligent men and women are daily becoming more disgusted with a Press that sets sensation before truth and has raised vulgarity to the level of an exact science. Even if

POISON GAS OR FRESH AIR

the Dictators should realise the existence of this attitude—and they have no criteria beyond circulation and revenue—they would be unable to meet it. You can do many things to and with a newspaper, but you cannot change its spirit overnight with the same ease as one of our most widely-circulated journals once swung round in twenty-four hours from the advocacy of a Protective tariff to the championship of Free Trade because its earlier attitude was considered to be unpopular among its patrons.

Circulation and advertising revenue (the advertiser provides the real profits) are the twin gods of the Dictators, as the reduction of expenditure is their prophet. Thinking in terms of millions, they are

STENTOR

temperamentally incapable of realising the influence of journals appealing only to thousands, just as they conceive influence to be synonymous with circulation, although some of the "best sellers" among our daily and Sunday papers are singularly destitute of any real influence over the drugged minds of their readers. So there is scope for the re-emergence of the independent organ of the type which has demonstrated in the past that great influence may go hand in hand with small circulation and an inconsiderable revenue from drapery advertisements, provided that its conductors are informed with sincerity, fearlessness, and ideals, and refuse to regard the shibboleths of the minute as divine revelations.

And if such a Press do not emerge

POISON GAS OR FRESH AIR

from behind the smoke screen and the poison gas ejected by Stentor, then Democracy will have the newspapers it deserves.

Let it be emphasised that the objections on public grounds to the Trustification of the Press are based even more on the future than on present conditions. The Dictators of to-day may be high-souled patriots, men of vision, men alive to the measure of their responsibilities. The Dictators of to-morrow may be mercenary profit-seekers, reactionaries, men who use their newspapers as weapons in the fight against decent housing or fair wages, or who bring up their battalions in aid of campaigns to starve education or foment war. There is nothing to prevent the Press of this or any other country

STENTOR

from coming under the financial control of armament makers, international traffickers in drugs, or wealthy men who desire the perpetuation of the slum. There is nothing to prevent its domination by aliens or the worst type of "market-rigging" financier.

That is to say, there is nothing save public opinion, which is itself hamstrung by the passing of the Independent Press.

APPENDIX

The growth of the Newspaper Combine has become so complex, with its interlocking directorates and the holdings of one company in another, that details would weary the reader. But in order that he may understand the process, the following is given as a typical example.

The Amalgamated Press, of which Sir William Berry is chairman, was formed at the end of last year to take over another undertaking of the same name. This is one of the Northcliffe ventures, which grew so amazingly that it eventually owned

STENTOR

over a hundred weekly, fortnightly, monthly and annual publications ; ten libraries ; the Waverley Book Co. Ltd., which is concerned with educational publications ; the Radio Press, Ltd ; two other publishing concerns ; and controlling interests in one of the largest paper-making concerns in the country and in a Canadian paper company owning over a thousand square miles of timber land. The new company also took over a dozen publications from Cassell & Co. Ltd.

Sir William Berry is also the chairman of Allied Newspapers, Ltd., which owns the share capital in Allied Northern Newspapers, Ltd., and owns or controls the London *Sunday Times*, and a considerable number of morning, evening and

APPENDIX

Sunday papers in Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow and elsewhere, including the *Daily Despatch*, the *Sunday Chronicle*, the *Empire News*, the *Daily Record*, and the *North Mail and Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. At the end of last year, the company also agreed to buy all the ordinary shares in the *Daily Sketch* and *Sunday Herald, Ltd.*

This list is far from giving a complete record of Sir William Berry's interests, which also include the chairmanship of the companies owning the *Financial Times* and the *Western Mail*, the latter one of the leading newspapers in the West of England. But the details are sufficient to illustrate the process whereby publications of the most varied nature and influence, and appealing to

APPENDIX

specialised local interests all over the country as well as to the public as a whole, have been and are being brought under a common control.

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This candid and unprejudiced survey inquires why the majority of marriages to-day seem to be so unsatisfactory, and finds the answer in the sexual ethic of our civilization which is ill adapted to our social and economic needs. The problems of sex-morality, sex-education, prostitution, in-breeding, birth-control, trial-marriage, and polygamy are all touched upon.

The Next Chapter: the War against the Moon. By ANDRÉ MAUROIS, author of 'Ariel', etc.

This imaginary chapter of world-history (1951-64) from the pen of one of the most brilliant living French authors mixes satire and fancy in just proportions. It tells how the press of the world is controlled by five men, how world interest is focussed on an attack on the moon, how thus the threat of world-war is averted. But when the moon retaliates . . .

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

Galatea, or the Future of Darwinism.

By W. RUSSELL BRAIN.

This non-technical but closely-reasoned book is a challenge to the orthodox teaching on evolution known as Neo-Darwinism. The author claims that, although Neo-Darwinian theories can possibly account for the evolution of forms, they are quite inadequate to explain the evolution of functions.

Scheherazade, or the Future of the English Novel. By JOHN CARRUTHERS.

A survey of contemporary fiction in England and America lends to the conclusion that the literary and scientific influences of the last fifty years have combined to make the novel of to-day predominantly analytic. It has thus gained in psychological subtlety, but lost its form. How this may be regained is put forward in the conclusion.

Caledonia, or the Future of the Scots.

By G. M. THOMSON.

Exit the Scot! Under this heading the Scottish people are revealed as a leaderless mob in whom national pride has been strangled. They regard, unmoved, the spectacle of their monstrous slum-evil, the decay of their industries, the devastation of their countryside. This is the most compact and mordant indictment of Scottish policy that has yet been written.

Albyn, or Scotland and the Future. By C. M. GRIEVE, author of 'Contemporary Scottish Studies', etc.

A vigorous answer, explicit and implicit, to *Caledonia*, tracing the movements of a real Scottish revival, in music, art, literature, and politics, and coming to the conclusion that there is a chance even now for the regeneration of the Scottish people.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

Lares et Penates, or the Future of the Home. By H. J. BIRNSTINGL.

All the many forces at work to-day are influencing the planning, appearance, and equipment of the home. This is the main thesis of this stimulating volume, which considers also the labour-saving movement, the 'ideal' house, the influence of women, the servant problem, and the relegation of aesthetic considerations to the background. Disconcerting prognostications follow.

NEARLY READY

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A survey of the methods of government in the past leads the author to a consideration of conditions in the world of to-day. He then indicates the lines along which progress may develop.

Hermes, or the Future of Chemistry. By T. W. JONES, B.Sc., F.C.S.

Chemistry as the means of human emancipation is the subject of this book. To-day chemistry is one of the master factors of our existence; to-morrow it will dominate every phase of life, winning for man the goal of all his endeavour, economic freedom. It may also effect a startling change in man himself.

The Future of Physics. By L. L. WHYTE.

The last few years have been a critical period in the development of physics. We stand on the eve of a new epoch. Physics, biology, and psychology are converging towards a scientific synthesis of unprecedented importance whose influence on thought and social custom will be so profound as to mark a stage in human evolution. This book interprets these events and should be read in connexion with *Gallio*, by J. W. N. Sullivan, in this series.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

Ikonoclastes, or the Future of Shakespeare. By HUBERT GRIFFITHS.

Taking as text the recent productions of classical plays in modern dress, the author, a distinguished dramatic critic, suggests that this is the proper way of reviving Shakespeare and other great dramatists of the past, and that their successful revival in modern dress may perhaps be taken as an indication of their value.

IN PREPARATION

Bacchus, or the Future of Wine. By P. MORTON SHAND.

Mercurius, or the World on Wings. By C. THOMPSON WALKER.

The Future of Sport. By G. S. SANDILANDS.

The Future of India. By T. EARLE WELBY.

The Future of Films. By ERNEST BETTS.

