• FORUM •

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ARE THE WORKERS BETTER OFF?

Notes on Horatio's Article

1. These notes are not offered as a reply to all of the large number of points made by Horatio, but as a contribution to discussion on some of them, and also as a plea that the question itself be divided into more easily handled sections. As it stands, Horatio's article sets out to answer one question but in fact introduces some material that properly belongs to different questions.

For example, some of the material is designed only to show how bad are the workers' conditions now. This would be quite sufficient to answer some defender of capitalism who maintained that conditions now are not bad at all, but it does not answer someone who admits that conditions are bad now but claims that they used to be worse. To show that conditions 50 or 100 years ago were better than, or not worse than, they are now we need to be told something about these conditions, and on some points Horatio fails to do this.

Also it seems somewhat confusing to introduce into an article on the condition of the workers some material which deals with questions that are not specifically working class ones. It may be that the use of chemically treated foods, tobacco, plastics, cosmetics, rayon, etc., is bad for the human race and that this is a legitimate ground on which to condemn capitalism, but these are things that affect capitalists as well as workers; they do not mark a class division.

2. Horatio makes some effective points against those who say sweepingly that the workers are better off than they used to be, but it is hard to say from the article what summary answer he would give to the question himself. Its general tone might indicate that he would say that they are worse off; but he makes no specific statement to that effect.

This suggests as a reasonable possibility that Horatio sees the difficulty of giving a useful general answer at all to so sweeping a question. The question itself means different things to different people and to each one it covers a number of distinct and not very closely related factors. Some sort of answer can be given to each of the separate parts of the question but when you try to lump them all together it is like being asked something very nebulous such as "Do the workers get more or less out of life in 1953 than in 1853?"

Some of the separate questions deal with aspects that can be measured with at least a certain amount of accuracy. It is, for example, possible to form a rough idea of the movement of wages and prices and the division of the national income, but others are not measurable in that way. It may be argued with some evidence that the workers as a whole are and feel more insecure in their jobs and are more harassed by fear of war at the present time than they were 50 or 100 years ago, but to prove this is another matter.

3. Dealing with some of the measurable aspects, Horatio goes to the "Economist" Coronation number, but he has not always been accurate in reproducing what the "Economist" says. (There is some excuse for this, as the material is presented by the "Economist" with an inexcusable paucity of explanation about terms and sources.)

Horatio attributes to the "Economist" responsibility for the statement that in the past 50 years "the productivity of the British working class doubled and the profits of the employers rose." The first statement appears to be a misreading of the "Economist" graph (in the section "Self-Protection and Progress") which shows real national income per head of the population as having increased by 75 per cent since 1900.

Horatio's reference to profits is more seriously misleading. It is correct that the "Economist" graph ("Division of the Home National Income") shows that profits have risen since 1900 as expressed in money terms, but it also shows that wages and salaries have each risen by much more than profits. The result is that whereas in 1900 wages and salaries (the latter largely made up of the pay of Clerks and Shop Assistants) represented about 54 per cent of National income, by 1952 the percentage had increased to 74 per cent. Profits and rent, which in 1900 represented 46 per cent, had by 1952 fallen to 26 per cent.

For various reasons these percentage figures of the total wages and salaries bill of the whole working class do not in fact support the rosy interpretation put on them by the "Economist," but it seems a very inadequate way of answering the "Economist" for Horatio to quote half their statement and ignore the rest.

A more useful indication of changes since 1900 affecting the economic position of the workers is the movement of real wages (money wage rates adjusted for changes of prices); and the division of the product of manufacturing industry as shown by census of production returns. Real wages have risen since 1850 and since 1900, though not by as much as the increase since 1900 shown in the "Economist" graph, the basis of which is unexplained. As regards the census of production figures, these indicate that the "workers' share" increased slightly between 1906 and 1948.

4. This brings us to what is perhaps the most important aspect of the whole

HELP TO MAKE OUR N. PADDINGTON BY-ELECTION CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS BY GIVING MONEY AND EFFORT

question. Horatio says that if in some respect or other "workers' conditions improved" that is fatal to the Socialist case. In line with this view he seeks to show that any apparent improvement is a fraud, and also presents it as if it were simply the result of shrewd calculation by the employers. He leaves out of account entirely the struggles of the workers and the part they have played in this. He says for example that "shorter hours" so far from being an improvement "is an investment by the capitalists to increase workers' efficiency. So far from making their lives easier they make them work harder than ever before for less."

This is overstatement to the point of being more wrong than right. Workers have not been in error in fighting for shorter hours, and employers have not been wrong from their point of view in resisting such demands. As official inquiries have shown, reduced hours of work have frequently reduced production in spite of employers' efforts. The Australian employers now demanding longer hours are not necessarily blind to their own interest.

Marx and Engels did not think it futile for the workers to struggle and they were right. Marx and Engels did not think that if the workers fought and gained some improvement, that ruled out Socialism. Marx (see Chapter XIV of "Value Price and Profit") did not think that the workers' struggles could play no part in the division of the product to the detriment of the employers, and when Engels, having in mind living standards and ability to put up organised resistance to the employers, wrote in 1885 that "the factory hands . . . are undoubtedly better off than before 1848" and that the conditions of the engineers, carpenters, and bricklayers had "remarkably improved since 1848," he did not go on to say that this ended Socialism, as Horatio would have it. (For Engels' statement see 1892 preface to "Condition of the Working Class in 1844," pages XIV and XV).

Marx and Engels said, as we can today, that workers' struggles under capitalism are necessary and can produce certain results even though they cannot end exploitation and the subject position of the workers.

5. Limitations on space preclude dealing with a number of other points, but it would be a pity to leave without comment on the ingenious argument that it is no use living longer because it is all so miserable anyway.

Just to cheer Horatio up, here is an amended version of W. S. Gilbert's famous lines:—

Is Death a boon?
If so it must befall
That Death when'er he call
Can't call too soon! H.

ON GETTING WORSE OFF AND SOCIALISM

The article in Forum (October) entitled "Are the Workers Better Off?" asserts

(1) That the answer "YES" to the question rules out both Marx and Socialism.

(2) That the answer "NO' is a sound one, in harmony with Socialism.

The writer mentions a number of features of Capitalism which, he maintains, constitute evidence in favour of Marx's theory of increasing misery:—

"(b) 'All means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over and exploitation of the producers.'

1. They mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrading him to the level of an appendage of a machine.
2. They estrange him from the intellectual potentialities of the labour progress.
3. They distort the conditions under which he works.
4. They subject him to despotism.
5. They transform his life-time into working time.
6. They drag his wife and child beneath the juggernaut of capital."

Now, although I agree that Marx and Engels did think along the lines of increasing misery, I find it quite impossible to believe that the worker—mutilated into a fragment of a man, degraded to the level of an appendage of a machine, subject to despotism, growing misery, oppression, slavery and exploitation, under the juggernaut of capital, as detailed in Horatio's article—could, under those conditions, understand and want Socialism.

A starving man in the kind of society Horatio describes wants half a dollar for a square meal, not Socialism — and rightly so. Under such conditions of millions of unemployed, half-starved and embittered wretches, a mass socialist response involving the rejection of both leadership and the idealistic mode of thought is not possible. One might note here that Marx and Engels, holding the increasing misery theory, did not reject leadership; further, that their idea of the revolution was much more gradual than that of the Party (see Communist Manifesto).

If Horatio's (and Marx's) views of the workers' future under Capitalism are correct, a much more likely outcome of mass misery will be the rise once again of leader-dictators, with all the intolerance of opposition and irrational adulation such regimes bring with them—hardly conducive to socialist reflection. Broadly speaking, the desperate conditions Horatio envisages (requiring, as they would, immediate "solution") are not so conducive to reflective judgment, calm, sober appraisal, as to highly emotional, subjective judgments, the general renunciation of reason as "all talk and no action," coupled with a greater tendency to acts of violence, theft, plunder, and personal, non-social solutions of the "I'm all right, — you, Jack" variety.

Moreover, if Horatio thinks that a working class faced with catastrophic conditions, downtrodden, etc., etc., is capable of a socialistic response, it is very difficult to see why it should ever be driven to that position in the first place. It is surely reasonable to suppose that insight into social problems will be a growth, a development, reflecting itself in changes in institutions and improvements in material well-being and social status. Or are we to assume the growth of logic and reason in a social situation which generates and perpetuates slavery, degradation and oppression, and all the mental attitudes which are an essential condition of such a society? Gentlemen, be reasonable!

Horatio's earlier quotation from Marx about "the growth of the revolt of the working class; always increasing in numbers, disciplined, united and organised . . . by capitalist production itself" is only part of the story, as the facts of experience show. Under Capitalism the interests of members of the working class are not identical—they are often bitterly opposed, individual against individual, group against group. This is as much a functional feature of capitalist society as the existence of the working class itself.

The aims of the unemployed and the employed are sufficiently different to produce different organisational loyalties and, in many cases, open hostility. Similarly, black-coated workers versus industrial workers, one nationality against another. These differences, backed by prejudices (particularly snobbishness) are even more deeply entrenched in time of internal economic crisis. In an atmosphere of general insecurity, each tries to retain what he has, fearful of encroach-

ments from above or below in the social scale, hoping and probably praying for better times and leaders in the near future.

So far from Capitalism unifying workers in revolt against their capitalist masters, war, and the threat of danger from outside the social group, unify and discipline vast masses of workers—to kill and maim each other.

Like the struggles between groups of workers, these wars have been a functional feature of competitive capitalist society, disruptive of international organisation on the part of working party. I assume that not even the stout Horatio contends that class-conscious struggle against Capitalist masters is a more prominent feature of world Capitalism than the struggle between national groups.

When Horatio implies that the achievement of Socialism is compatible with the increasing misery theory, he is wrong. Socialism, as traditionally conceived by the Party, with its emphasis on understanding and rejection of leadership, is out if the increasing misery theory is correct. But that doesn't make the theory wrong, though it does reveal some inconsistency on Horatio's part.

J. McGREGOR.

(Next article: "Horatio's Increasing Misery—A Refutation.")

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence and articles should be sent to FORUM, S.P.G.B., 52, Clapham High St., London, S.W.4. Subscriptions 12 months, 7/6d, 6 months 3/9d. Cheques and P.O.'s should be made payable to: E. Lake, S.P.G.B.

Dear Sirs,

Anyone who had any illusions about the well-being of the Party should have had them destroyed by the recent Delegate Meeting. Those who were present must have been driven to the conclusion that the Party is moribund, and is only kept going by good-natured habit and the absence of anything better for members to do. I should like to indicate some of the factors which I think have been responsible for this decline.

Firstly, the nature of the Party itself. This, despite the lip service we pay to such ideas as "delegation of function," "the withering away of the state," etc., is shot through with authoritarian thinking.

Organisation in a socialist party, as in a socialist society, should be the minimum necessary to co-ordinate activity. But examine the Party in the light of this argument! Permission of the E.C. is necessary before any of us can chalk on a wall, stick up a poster or publish any written matter. Surely if any of us utters anything contrary to the socialist case the proper thing for the Party to do is insist on a recantation or our resignation—but not to set up a censorship.

The rule obliging members to undergo a test before they can start a meeting betrays the same mentality. In fact, one almost finds that the ukase of the E.C. is required before one can do anything at all. The result is that an enormous amount of goodwill and energy is lost in the toils of the Party bureaucracy. The illusion that decisions at Head Office beget activity dies hard.

Another factor making for inertia is the blindly minded or dog-in-the-manger attitude of many members. Any suggestion for the improvement of propaganda is met with "We've tried it before" or similar arguments. Typical of this is some comrades' unwillingness to do anything about the state of the S.S. and their determination that nobody else shall. But the worst expression of this attitude is where members support one form of activity and oppose all others. They support election campaigns, for example, and oppose the retention of 52 Clapham High Street, or vice versa.

Again, with fifty years of history behind it, the Party, an allegedly internationalist organisation, can do no better than leave all foreign relations in the hands of one member, while foreign organisations with whom we might have useful contact go crying in the wilderness, or their literature is left unopened and gathering dust in the pigeon-holes at H.Q. Yet none of us dare do anything about organising a bureau of people with knowledge of foreign countries. That would be presumptuous. Meanwhile we attend the E.C.'s pleasure.

What can we do about it? I really don't know. The habits of half a century are not shaken off easily, and the E.C., with its committees, is jealous of its power, as those of us who have tried to do something have found out. Meanwhile we shall **not** have our weekly paper for those writers who, the Editorial Committee says, cannot write, and our speakers will continue to stay away from meetings.

Yours faithfully,
K. R. SMITH.

"Forum," S.P.G.B.

Dear Comrades,

I have to inform you that at their meeting of October 9th, my branch decided by 8 votes to 5 to cancel their order for "Forum."

Purchases of further copies will be left to individual members.

Yours fraternally,
E. T. CRITCHFIELD,
Ealing Branch Secretary.

REPLY TO EALING

In the past Ealing has distributed as many as three times the number of Forums as is represented by the total votes cast at the branch meeting which made this decision. It appears now that Ealing members (or as many of them who cast the majority vote at this meeting) feel strongly that Forum should cease publication. If this is true, what a pity it is if they keep the reasons to themselves. What better opportunity is there to make their views widely known than to have them published in Forum: putting their arguments before members whose numbers near enough reach the total membership of the Party. Ealing Branch is invited to consider the question and to depute one of its members to state a case in these columns. If it accepts the challenge the question might also be considered as to what sort of democracy it is when eight members of a branch decide that five other members (apart from others who might not have been in attendance at that meeting) who disagree with them should not have the facilities of the branch for obtaining matter published by the Party.

Ealing apart, if Forum can claim no merit beyond the fact that it reflects the Party and shows the streams of thought flowing among the members, then that reflection is illuminating and useful. Looking back on some of the bitter disputes of the past, it is evident that despite "crystal clear" principles the application of them brings to the surface varying interpretations of them and different levels of understanding. Can it be said that if Forum had existed then that the Party would have lost in tolerance and in understanding of the contrary points of view?

It seems that Party members want Forum and that it has come to stay. It could reach distinction or it could peter out. Either would be a measure of the maturity of the membership.—Editors.

ON CLASS STRUGGLE

Judging by the discussion at the Delegate Meeting on the item "Is it the Party's job to prosecute the class struggle?" there is a considerable amount of confusion in members' minds about what is meant by "class struggle." It seems that a definition of this struggle in economic terms ("fought over division of wealth, conditions of employment, etc., within class society") is disputed by some. May I therefore give reasons for my supporting the contention that it **is** economic and not political.

The Party's leaflet "The Next Step for Trade Unionists" says this about class struggle: "It is only by waging the struggle on the political field for the replacement of Capitalism by Socialism that the workers can free themselves from economic domination." Clearly, this political struggle concerns the replacement of one social system by another, and is not the same as the struggle of workers v. capitalists within Capitalism. However, since some members insist that "class struggle" assumes these two "aspects" we will get nowhere by arguing over definitions. Let us try to resolve the disagreement by referring to class struggle (1) economic or industrial, both sides "recognising" Capitalism, and class struggle (2) political, for and against the establishment of Socialism.

Now, the SPGB has as its object the successful prosecution of class struggle (2). In fact it is, as Groves put it, "the only Party that prosecutes that part of the class struggle.' **But it doesn't prosecute class struggle (1).**

Some members have argued that, although our aim is to abolish ourselves as the working class, this doesn't mean that we give up class struggle. Again, the confusion of meaning is apparent. The abolition of classes is NOT the same as, part of, or inseparably bound up with, fighting the boss. True, when a worker is a socialist he has no illusions about class struggle (1) and its inevitability under Capitalism. But other workers who are not socialists—and who even fight class struggle (2) against socialists (i.e. work actively for capitalist political parties)—they also fight the boss. Thus we see that directing our efforts towards abolishing ourselves as the working class really means not giving up class struggle, but changing it from (1) to (2).

The same conclusion may be reached in answering those who say "then that means you reject class struggle?" No, it doesn't. It means that we prosecute (2) with the object of ending (1) and (2). Since (1) goes on indefinitely, it is not possible to speak of it as having any object—certainly it has no such object as that of the SPGB. The main reason for not making an object out of prosecuting (1) is that it diverts us from (2); whereas of we concern ourselves only with (2) we are doing the best that can be done about (1). In other words, working to get rid of the boss is the best way of fighting him. He is not worried about (1) —he can handle that all right—but once attention is concentrated on (2) he's had it.

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SOCIALISM A CLASS ISSUE?

It will be said that, in arguing as above, I refuse to see the relationship between (1) and (2). My answer to this is that as a socialist I am concerned primarily with (2).

The ideas of the participants in (1) are not necessarily socialist. True, socialists and non-socialists alike are involved in (1), but it is only in reference to (2) that they are distinguished from each other. Each side participating in (1) "recognises" the other side, and frames its actions on the assumption that class society will continue. A striking example of this was given by Walter Stevens, E.T.U. secretary, who went out of his way to state that "we don't want the employers' association to disintegrate." This pinpoints the difference between trade union ideas and socialist ideas—since the latter ARE aimed at the disintegration of the employers' associations and hence of the workers' associations also.

There is no doubt about who's who in class struggle (1). Workers are on one side and capitalists on the other. Let us be equally clear about who's who in class struggle (2). On the one side are those who want and work for Socialism, and they are opposed by all others. This latter division cuts across all other divisions. A worker comes into the SPGB, not as a worker, but as a socialist. A capitalist stays outside, not because he is a capitalist, but because he is not a socialist—on the other hand, another capitalist comes in because he **is** a socialist.

The function of the SPGB is SOLELY to express the interests of socialists. No justification for this statement is needed other than our much-misunderstood "hostility clause," which simply means that we are opposed to all organisations whose object conflicts with ours. There are, however, a number of further reasons for taking up this position:

1. The strength of the Party depends upon the energies of its members. The more these energies are diverted to the day-to-day struggle, the less is available for propagating Socialism.
2. There is a danger in "broadening" our case to achieve objects other than Socialism. If, for example, we have a special message for trade unionists, then we may attract people into the Party who join because they agree with this message and not necessarily with the Party's object, which they may relegate to the future (as some members do now).
3. We invite misunderstanding if we allow ourselves to be diverted from advocating Socialism. If our "policy" on strikes, for instance, is attacked, then the audience may associate their acceptance or rejection of this policy with acceptance or rejection of the case for Socialism.

TRADE UNIONISM

We turn now from the general question of class struggle to the particular one of trade unionism. There has been nothing in Forum about this since Waters' contribution in October, 1952. In that article he quoted an ex-member's statement that the Party had an attitude to things but not a policy. The ex-member's point was a good one. If the Party says it has an attitude to something in theory, then it is expected to have a policy in practice. That is why I have come to the conclusion that it is better for the Party to explain, rather than have an attitude towards, features of Capitalism. When someone asks "what's your attitude to this?" or "what's your policy on that?" he usually wants our support for this or that —and Socialism doesn't really come into it. And if he gets our verbal support, he will feel justified in asking for tangible evidence of it. If the Party supports striking workers, for example, then why shouldn't it contribute to strike funds? The view that the Party's policy concerns only Socialism is an extreme one —though it must be remembered that only the extreme view is destined to prevail. Where members confuse themselves (and others) is that they think the Party must have an attitude of either support or opposition to everything. If some of us say that we cannot agree that the Party should support strikes, that doesn't mean that we think it should oppose

them. What we oppose is the system that gives rise to strikes. Statements such as "we support trade union activity that is genuinely in the interests of the working class (S.S., July, 1952) are made as a sop to those who clamour for a positive attitude to the day-to-day struggle, but who are negative about Socialism. Members, by contrast, should be positive about Socialism, and need not be embarrassed in saying "the Party does not support trade union activity, neither does it oppose it."

The only thing the SPGB should advocate is Socialism, and nothing should be allowed to overshadow this object. Thus in "Questions of the Day" we find the following statement on trade unionism (p. 37):—

> "The SPGB, while recommending trade unionists to offer their utmost resistance to the worsening of conditions, never fails to point out that under Capitalism the pressure upon the workers is inevitable. It is insufficient, therefore, merely to apply the brake to these worsening conditions. The system that gives rise to them must be abolished."

The recommendation—a rather gratuitous one—to trade unionists is in the subsidiary clause, and the emphasis is correctly laid on the object of the Party. By contrast, however, the editorial on "The Strikes in France" (Sept. S.S.) does not do this:—

> "The real tragedy of the trade union movement in France and in the world generally is that most trade unionists allow themselves to be diverted from single-minded concentration on working class unity because of their attachment to nationalism and to support of one or other forms of Government of Capitalism."

and, in the final paragraph:—

> "It is of great importance, especially in a more or less general strike, that there should be common action not only to come out on strike but to go back as a united body."

The objection to these statements is not so much to what is said as to what is left unsaid. The above, and a further reference to "world working class unity" make no mention of what this unity should be **for.** The real tragedy of the trade union movement, as far as socialists are concerned, is that it has got nothing to do with the socialist movement, and I don't see what is to be gained by pretending otherwise. The following commentary on trade unionism in America, by Krech and Crutchfield, illustrates my point:—

> "The care taken by labor unions to assign a maintenance crew to keep furnaces and pumps in working order during a strike or the cases where labor unions make money loans to employers in order to tide them over temporary economic difficulties or the instances where labor unions and industry both support the same tariff legislation—all testify dramatically to labor's concern for maintaining the status quo. Labor may regard management as class conscious; management may regard labor as class conscious, but neither labor itself nor management itself is radical or Fascist in the sense of wanting to make fundamental changes in the economic pattern of the country. The militant striking worker will usually reject, with honest and righteous indignation, the proferred helping hand of the radical. Such group feelings as may exist among members of a given union are usually centered around immediate and specified objectives and very rarely around a 'revolutionary program and purpose.'"
>
> (Theory and Problems of Social Psychology, p. 556.)

For "management" read "the capitalists" and for "radical" read "socialist" and you have quite a fair statement of the position. By all means, therefore, let the Party explain the class struggle that goets on within Capitalism. But whenever its speakers and writers find themselves talking about conditions that they say "should be" (as in the editorial on strikes) let them never forget that these are socialist conditions. S.R.P.

SOCIALISM, VIOLENCE AND AUTHORITY

S.R.P. (Sept. Forum) asks: What is the Party's attitude to the use of violence in connection with the establishment of Socialism?

Karl Marx once stated that a revolutionary party does not **make** a revolution. A revolution occurs when an old society is pregnant with the new; a revolutionary party is only the midwife. This wise remark is just as true of a socialist revolution, which Marx never saw, as of social revolutions of which he knew so much.

A socialist majority in Parliament, elected for Socialism alone, will have every opportunity for giving this socialist child an independent existence. The initial steps are three in number:

1 Arrangements for supplying everyone with the essentials of life without the necessity of money. These arrangements, determined by the then prevailing conditions, will have been already formulated.

2 Requisitioning the powers of production. This step, a logical corollary to the first, automatically extinguishes the capitalist class as an economic category.

3 Abolition of money and its allied instruments. The abolition of money means the abolition of buying and selling, which means the cessation of stealing. No one steals the things he needs if he is adequately supplied through legitimate channels; no one steals the things he does not need if he cannot sell them. Also, any hoard of money in the possession of an ex-capitalist will be useless for buying the services of any individual to throw any kind of spanner into the works.

These three initial steps should be taken immediately a socialist party achieves political power.

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An intelligent capitalist, seeing a socialist majority in the House of Commons, will accept the inevitable and behave himself. Unfortunately, the capitalist class is not very intelligent as a class, even if it does have some intelligent individuals in it. Attempts at sabotage by dispossessed and short-sighted individuals might well occur here and there (it will be very surprising if they do not) but such individuals will have only their own energies and small-scale weapons.

Long before the Socialist Party was born, or even Karl Marx was heard of, society developed within itself all the necessary forces for "keeping the peace." They are:

1 A police force with very wide powers for maintaining public order, even to the extent of calling upon the nearest military depot for assistance.

2 Magistrates' courts, prisons, lunatic asylums; and there has lately been added the Criminal Justice Act, 1948, under which, if certain conditions are fulfilled, a person convicted can be certified as insane.

Electing a socialist party for Socialism merely authorises that party to establish the common ownershi pand democratic control of the means of living for the benefit of all, and does not necessarily authorise the party to disband immediately those forces which society has

built up for maintaining the peace, nor to repeal those laws under which those forces act. The Party's attitude on this matter is well summed up in the Declaration of Principles, which speaks of **converting** those forces from instruments of oppression to agents of emancipation, not of immediately disbanding them. The emergencies of childbirth know only one law—anything is right if it saves life.

Police, magistrates and prison officials are people intelligent enough to safeguard themselves by doing just their duty and always obeying the last order without bothering about changes in the House of Commons. They all know that the House of Commons is representative of the community as a whole, and they all know that the community as a whole is a very powerful thing. Any laxity on their part can soon be dealt with by means which already exist; if there is no laxity they can be left alone.

When Socialism is well under way and there is a big drop in the incidence of crime, it will be the time to find new uses for redundant magistrates and empty prisons. There is, of course, nothing to stop a Socialist Home Secretary from reviewing the cases of those sentenced under Capitalism and, where it appears that the delinquent is solely a victim of Capitalism, release him forthwith, and give him a fair chance. To be humane when it can be afforded, without being humane when it cannot be afforded, is a very good watchword for those who have powerful forces at their disposal.

AUTHORITY

Engels' essay "On Authority," which S.W. London Branch wishes discussed in Forum, arose from his meeting, to quote his own words, a number of socialists who had launched a regular crusade against what they call the principle of authority. In this essay Engels defines authority as "the imposition of the will of another upon ours," and, after examining the social arrangements, demonstrates that there must be some sort of authority in any organisation, and comes down hard on to anti-authoritarians.

The views expressed by Engels are sound enough, but he overlooks one vital point. Subordinating ourselves to the will of another for the good of all, ourselves included, is one thing; but subordinating ourselves to the will of another for his aggrandisement and our disadvantage is another entirely. I have yet to meet a person crusading against the **principle** of authority, though I have met many who have raged against a particular authority in a particular set of circumstances.

The man who rejects all authority all the time may be expressing an unconscious desire to exercise his own judgment or some creative talent, either or both of which may have been suppressed too long by an overbearing authority. One often meets an individual who is a far better asset to the community for being left alone.

Nevertheless, when a number of people are organised for any one purpose, rules are imperative, more so if they are organised for more than one purpose. Such rules inevitably impose specified responsibilities upon particular individuals. Where there is a responsibility there must also be an authority for discharging it.

The millions who will be organised in the future Socialist Society of Great Britain, a very complex society, will not dispense with rules; nor will these millions legislate on the thousand and one little matters constantly arising. They will do much as they do today. They will elect 600 gentlemen to the House of Commons but, in this case, charged with the responsibility of organising production and distribution for the benefit of all, which responsibility involves the authority to enact such laws as changing conditions warrant.

If a particular set of conditions is likely to vary suddenly in unforeseen ways, the House of Commons will legislate on general lines and delegate the responsibility of dealing with these variations to the appropriate Minister, who will discharge his responsibilities by Ministerial Order, leaving the House to sit back and collect the growls which come up the usual pipeline—just as things are done today. A very good illustration is the rationing laws of the last 14 years; Ministerial Orders (a few hundreds) all arising from the Minister having delegated to him the responsibility of "maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community." Ministers have much responsibility delegated to them, and a great deal of that is delegated still further, all of which is inevitable in any complex society.

* * *

There is nothing wrong with the political machinery of today except that it is in the hands of the capitalist class and is used for capitalist purposes. The same machinery, by knocking off a few chunks here (the Lords and Monarchy, for example) and adding a chunk or two there (a Ministry of Production and Ministry of Fine Arts, for example) will do very well for a socialist commonwealth.

Even under Socialism there will have to be a constant collaboration between the executives of production, of transport and of supply, to whose collective decisions those who frame time-tables will have to conform. Then the driver of a goods train will have to conform to a time-table he has probably not had a voice in preparing—but he may be thankful, not sorrowful, at not having a voice. The smooth running of a railway depends, not on the democratic votes of those who know nothing of the job, but on a few people, who have specialised knowledge and executive ability, appointed by a Minister who is appointed by Parliament and answerable to Parliament.

However, under Socialism there will be room for advisory committees made up of representatives of different groups whose interests are affected, who will meet executive authorities and advise. Where there is a choice of decisions, just what decision is acceptable to most; the representatives first meeting and ironing out differences among themselves.

Then what about the emergencies of life? A socialist society will not, because it is a socialist society, be free from railway accidents, colliery disasters, outbreaks of fire, shipwrecks at sea and other emergencies which threaten life and call for teamwork. Time being the all-important factor, these things will not leave much room for general debate but, instead, will call for prompt decisions from one man (the most experienced is usually the leader) and equally prompt compliance from the rest of the team.

Those charged with responsibilities for the common good must have the right to issue instructions necessary, and only as far as is necessary, for the discharge of those responsibilities, and they are entitled to have those instructions obeyed. But there ought not to be any authority beyond what is necessary for the common good. This will leave each one to be the sole arbiter of his own sentiments and how they are to be shaped; while those with any creative talent should have room for self-expression, and room to be left alone if they so wish.

E. CARNELL.

HEAD OEFICE FORUMS

Every Saturday 7.30, from 14th November
Those interested are urged to come early to ensure a prompt start.

HAMPSTEAD BRANCH HISTORY CLASS

Wednesday 8 p.m. at Branch Room
4th Nov. Manorial System
18th Nov. Rise of Guilds & Towns
2nd Dec. Enclosures
16th Dec. Industrial Revolution

WRITERS AND PROPAGANDA

Assuming that we are seriously concerned with the reorganisation of Party propaganda, we cannot leave the subject without turning our attention to writers and writing.

The complaints about writers are slightly different from those regarding speakers. According to the Editorial Committee the difficulty is not so much a question of shortage as of quality. As with the question of speakers I would suggest that the fault lies not only with contributors, but also with the machinery set up by the Party to deal with them. Members of the Party who do not write and have not attended writers' classes do not appreciate the difficulties that confront writers who wish to contribute to the Socialist Standard.

Undoubtedly the Editorial Committee receives articles which are unsuitable for publication (as do all editorial bodies) but we have only the view of the Editorial Committee that these articles **are** unsuitable. I am not the only member who is critical of the methods adopted by them. I suggest that if the Editorial Committee complains that it lacks articles suitable for publication it very largely has only itself to blame.

* * *

As the reader may already suspect, I am a malcontent who has frequently fallen foul of the Editorial Committee's restrictions. It may be due to my lack of knowledge, or lack of ability, or a combination of both. On the other hand, it may be due to a peculiar dogmatism for which the Editorial Committee is noted.

It is a formidable body, and for a member to question its decisions is somewhat on a par with a Roman Catholic setting a booby-trap for the Pope. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that the Party is losing valuable propaganda material through insufficient control over its own Editorial Committee.

It is not only obscure writers who clash with the Editorial Committee. One writer in particular, whose knowledge and skill are beyond doubt and whose initials are well-known in the Socialist Standard, maintained a feud with the Editorial Committee for a considerable period because they would not accept an article under a particular title.

About three years ago, as a result of reading a newspaper report on a religious conference, I dashed off an article because I considered it to be important whilst the matter was still fresh in the public mind. The Editorial Committee, on receipt of the article, placed it in cold storage for twelve months before publication, with the result that it was no longer topical. Topicality, you may remember, is one of the things upon which the Editorial Committee places considerable importance.

There is another discouraging aspect of the Committee's desire for perfection —the question of style. Every writer has, or should have, his own individual style. One cannot disagree with the Editorial Committee's insistence upon accuracy of information and reasonable English and composition, but it makes an attempt to eliminate the writer's own style. He is told in the writers' class not to be humorous. Humour is frowned upon, particularly satire. The worker does not appreciate humour. He is humourless. He is regarded, apparently, as a grim and dull person immersed in his wage slavery.

My experience of non-socialist workers is completely different. They are just as appreciative of humour as anyone else. It is just possible that other members of the Party have a greater experience of the working class than that of the Editorial Committee, who appear to be an insular body, completely cut off from those people of whose appreciations they seem to have such a low opinion.

* * *

However enthusiastic a socialist may be there are very few who like economics. It is a dull and depressing subject which, unfortunately, must be studied and explained. If a writer can introduce a little satire into his explanations it is a great aid to digestion and improves the flavour.

At nearly every Annual Conference the same questions are put to the Editorial Committee in regard to the quality of articles in the Socialist Standard, and the answers are always accepted without much opposition. A non-Party listener at Conference might be excused for assuming that the Editorial Committee formulates the Party policy.

I return to my own experience again to illustrate another disagreement with the Committee's technique. I wrote an article during the war which showed the similarity between German and Allied propaganda, well laced with quotations from British and German newspapers. The article, although considered good, was turned down because the Committee thought that publication would prove dangerous to the continued activity of the Party. It seems that we must always forego the publicity that we so urgently require in order that we may not tread too heavily on the toes of the capitalist class.

Perhaps it would be a good thing if we did get into trouble occasionally. At least we could not incur the law's displeasure without a certain amount of commotion, and if the cause of our chastisement were accurately stated we would gain rather than lose.

One cannot dispute the fact that the Editorial Committee carries out an arduous task very efficiently, but the extremely conservative policy which the Party allows them to pursue is discouraging to writers and does not help to accelerate our growth.

LOUIS COX

Reply By S.S. Ed. Comm

According to his opening paragraphs, Comrade Cox set out to show that, if the quality of articles submitted to the Editorial Committee is not what it should be, "the fault lies not only with contributors, but also with the machinery set up by the Party to deal with them."

In view of this we were entitled to expect that Comrade Cox would try to be helpful by first showing that he had done his best to make use of the present machinery before becoming convinced that it is faulty, and that he would then suggest some alteration to the machinery that would put the matter right.

But, reading on, we find neither of these things. Instead, we get nstance after instance to show that Comrade Cox never tried to make use of the present machinery—indeed, he appears not to know what it is—and there is no further reference to the machinery and no mention whatever of any suggested alteration; that aspect seems to have been entirely forgotten.

He tells us that when the Editorial Committee rejects articles as unsuitable, "we have only the view of the Editorial Committee that these articles are unsuitable." This is, of course, quite inaccurate. A member whose article is rejected and who is not satisfied with the reasons given by the Editorial Committee can write to the Committee and say so, or can meet it and discuss the matter, and if he is still dissatisfied he can raise the matter with the E.C.

Other writers do this, but not Comrade Cox. Or, to be more accurate, whereas other writers ask for further explanation or make their complaint at the only time when it is useful to do so, i.e. when the rejection takes place, Comrade Cox waits for 5 or 10 years: by which time all the circumstances are likely to have been forgotten and the documents destroyed.

Also, other writers make their own

complaints and tell us what it is they are complaining about, but Comrade Cox solemnly presents for consideration an article by an unnamed writer, written at a date not stated, with a title that is not disclosed, and says that it was held up because of disagreement about the title. What is the Editorial Committee supposed to make of this?

We are then told about an article by Comrade Cox on religion that was, so he says, held up for 12 months, although it was topical. The article in question appears to be one published 5 years ago (September 1948). Why did not Comrade Cox ask for an expalnation at the time? There could have been various explanations; but how are we to remember now what they were? Good articles sometimes have to be left out because they are too long or too short to fit into the space available. Poorish but passable articles may be left out for months because there are better ones available; then a month may come when we have nothing else and must use them.

This kind of thing is very disappointing to writers but it is unavoidable. Incidentally, Comrade Cox has perhaps forfotten one point. He thinks that his article ought to have had priority over some other article, **his** to go in and **that** to come out. It is possible that the other writer might not see eye to eye with Comrade Cox, and whichever way the Editorial Committee decided the question, someone might not like it.

Comrade Cox thinks his article deserved priority because it was "topical"; but he has the wrong idea of what makes for topical importance. If some event happens that arouses keen and widespread interest, it may be important that the S.S. should have something to say about it in the next issue. But Comrade Cox's article dealt with an event that attracted only small and passing attention. It was about a newspaper's account of a report on discipline in post-war factories, published by the Church of England Youth Society.

Comrade Cox tells us that at the writers' class the student is told "not to be humorous. Humour is frowned upon, particularly satire. The worker does not appreciate humour. He is humourless. He is regarded, apparently, as a grim and dull person completely immersed in his wage slavery."

We do not know whether Comrade Cox thinks he heard this at a writers' class or has been told that someone else heard it. Either way it is a masterpiece of muddle and misinformation. What is actually impressed **on beginners** is that they should concentrate first on putting over what they have to say accurately and in simple straightforward English and leave the difficulties of humour until later on. This advice is based on experience of many terrible, allegedly humorous articles received from new writers.

Humorous articles from writers who know how to handle them are welcome and have repeatedly been asked for by the Editorial Committee. Comrade Cox's account of the Editorial Committee's views of humorous articles is therefore a completely fictitious one, so we do not need to waste space replying to his further observations on that question.

However, he also refers particularly to satire. Here we are on different ground, one about which Comrade Cox evidently has no experience. Not only in the "S.S." but in most journals subtly ironical remarks almost always manage to get themselves misunderstood by a number of readers. Any competent journalist or editor would confirm this.

It may be said that no particular harm is done by such misunderstanding, and this is often true, but in theoretical articles where the reader requires to concentrate and wants to be certain of the precise meaning of every word, subtleties of phrasing may defeat the object of the writer, which is to be understood without ambiguity.

If Comrade Cox doubts our statement about ironical phrases being misunderstood he might recall a very recent letter from a branch to the E.C., asking for an explanation of a sentence in the August 1953 "S.S." He will no doubt have seen this in E.C. Minutes.

Lastly, Comrade Cox, diligently pursuing his determined effort to show how little he knows about the machinery he criticises, takes the Editorial Committee to task for not publishing something that might get the Party into trouble. "Perhaps," he writes, "it would be a good thing if we did get into trouble occasionally." It would, he says, cause a commotion and would be a gain rather than a loss to the Party.

We can assure Comrade Cox that it would be very easy indeed to get into trouble. What with wartime defence regulations and libel and contempt of court it could easily be arranged for the S.S. to be suppressed in war-time, and for the Party now to have to foot big bills for libel damages.

But what has Comrade Cox's personal preference for this course of action to do with his complaint that the machinery for handling articles is faulty? In avoiding such trouble the Editorial Committee is acting on the instructions of the E.C., backed up by Conference decisions. Comrade Cox may think those decisions wrong but then his task should be to get them altered, not to complain because they are carried out.

If we may add a word in conclusion it is to refer to a legitimate complaint Comrade Cox could have made but didn't; that is the long delay that sometimes takes place in returning articles. It happens partly because the Editorial Committee must give priority to the current work of getting the "S.S." out. Re-reading rejected articles, in order to draw up a statement of explanation, takes time and must often be allowed to get into arrears. Secondly, some articles are not rejected out-of-hand but are kept because they may be used in later months if occasion arises.

TALAKWA OF THE WORLD — UNITE

Before leaving London, Mallam Zukogi was invited to address the annual Summer School of the Independent Labour Party meeting at Exeter University College.

The Declaration of Principles which forms the aims and objects of the Northern Elements Progressive Union is considered the most dynamic of all the political organisations operating in the Northern Region of Nigeria.

It declares:

"1. That the shocking state of social order as at present existing in Northern Nigeria is due to nothing but the 'family compact' rule of the so-called Native Administration in their present form.

"2. That owing to this unscrupulous and vicious system of administration by the family compact rulers, there is today in our society an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between the members of that vicious circle of Native Administrations on the one hand and the ordinary 'Talakwa' (or peasants) on the other.

CLARION CALL

"3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the Talakwa (peasants) from the domination of these conduits, by the reform of the present political institutions into democratic institutions.

"4. That this needed reform must be the work of the peasants.

"5. That the NEPU calls upon all the sons and daughters of Northern Nigeria to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to this vicious system of administration which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and political, social and economic slavery to freedom," concludes the manifesto of the Northern Elements Progressive Union.

—West African Pilot, 9.9.53.

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