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IDEAS AND ATTITUDES

In a previous article, I distinguished three usual meanings of the word "Socialism" :—

Socialism (1)—A future system of Society.

Socialism (2)——A body of theory.

Socialism (3)—An attitude or set of attitudes.

Some may have thought this a little unnecessary, an over-subtle ravelling out of something very simple. An example will show, however, that it is useful to make this distinction. Take the common sentence — "Our job as socialists is to put across socialist ideas in order that people shall adopt those ideas."

When one examines it, this sentence turns out to mean— "Our job as socialists is to put across Socialism (2) in order that people shall adopt Socialism (3)."

And putting it in this way enables us to see at once what was hidden before—that the word "ideas", as usual, has been used twice in different senses. This dangerous word "ideas", which means everything and nothing, is always used by Party speakers, because it is a word which their outdoor audiences can easily understand—or think they understand. But it would be better, perhaps, to insist on accuracy, as we have in many other instances.

In this particular case, having made plain that the object of propaganda is to get people to adopt Socialism (3), we can go on to discuss the question of whether or not the putting across of Socialism (2) is necessarily the best way of doing this. We can discuss what parts of Socialism (2) are most likely to do it, what methods of putting it across are the best, and the reasons why.

We can't discuss any of these things so well if we talk about "ideas". To talk of a person adopting Socialist ideas is to throw up a picture of a person accepting a coloured slide as a present, and fitting it neatly into his own private magic lantern. It is to put Socialist ideas into the same category as the information that the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066, or that all triangles have three sides.

But if, as I pointed out in an earlier article (Aug. 53) "Socialist ideas" are really a set of attitudes, the position is a very different one. An attitude does not only consist of knowledge of facts: it also makes those who have it want to do something, to take some action; it leads to feelings of liking for some people, institutions, action etc., and distaste for others; it makes one see some things very clearly, and ignore others completely, and interpret events one way rather than another.

How do people adopt, hold and change their attitudes? That is the sort of question which is thrown up by an analysis like this, and which is never thrown up by a discussion in terms of "ideas". It is a most important question for us to answer.

Social Psychology

Let us see what we can find out about this. The first place we shall look is among the works of social psychologists because they devote a great deal of attention to this sort of question. Much of this attention has been aroused on behalf of the Gallup Poll, and similar attempts to measure people's beliefs and attitudes, but latterly the theory has been made more general.

Here are some of the more important features of attitudes which have so far been unearthed in this field.

1. *Attitudes can be more or less precise.* People's attitudes will not all be alike: some will be clear, explicit and highly differentiated, while others will be loose, vague and relatively unstructured. A party member, for example, may have very well-defined attitudes towards the economic structure of society, the field of left-wing politics or racial genetics, and at the same time have very ill-defined and hazy attitudes towards religion, modern art or psychology. Every attitude can be placed somewhere along the scale from utmost clarity to utmost vagueness. This *clarity* means only a high degree of differentiation, and must not be confused with *strength.* In fact, a very strong prejudice is an almost certain sign of a relatively unstructured attitude.

2. *Attitudes can be more or less isolated.* With one individual, all his attitudes on every subject may be unified into one meaningful pattern, so that each one bears a definite recognised relation to each other one. This is very rare indeed. Where it exists, we may properly speak of him having an *ideology.* It is much more common for attitudes to be relatively disconnected, and for an individual to have loosely organised groups of attitudes, though none will be entirely independent of the rest. In such cases, a single attitude may be very quickly and easily changed without much altering the rest, and if left alone thereafter, will gradually swing back to its former state under the weak influence of its nearest unchanged neighbours, and the influence of social pressure. In the case of the individual whose attitudes are very closely connected, however, the reverse is true. It will be very difficult to change one attitude; but, once changed, this one will affect all the others, until the whole idealogy alters to a greater or lesser degree. Where a high degree of connectedness and unity exists, it will either be because of an individual's unusually

strong urge to find meaning in life, or because the world in which such a person lives is a relatively simple one. It can be "simple" in two ways: either it is a narrow existence which avoids the complexities of the world, or it is carried on in a highly organized state with a well-publicised official ideology.

3. *Attitudes can be more or less strong.* One attitude may persist for a long period, in spite of the impact of contradictory views and the pressure of contrary motivations. Another may be held for only a short time, and be easily changed. It will normally be found that a much higher degree of emotional tension is attached to the former, and this makes it stronger. The strength of an attitude must not be confused with its precision, or with its importance to the individual.

4. *Attitudes can be more or less important.* Not all of anyone's attitudes, no matter how strong or weak, are of equal importance for his day-to-day actions. A person's attitude towards gas warfare may be precise and may be strong, yet it may be of little importance in accounting for most of his behaviour in the world. On the other hand, his attitude towards equality may not be very precise, but it may be of tremendous importance in accounting for much of his social and political behaviour. An attitude will be important, in this sense, as it is given opportunity for expression in the events of an individual's existence.

Many other things could be said about attitudes, but from what has been said so far, we can at least see this: that the ordinary conception of attitudes as simply being "for, against, or neutral" is very far from containing the whole truth about attitudes.

Attitudes, then, can be precise or vague, isolated or connected, strong or weak and important or unimportant. How do we go about changing them?

Change of Attitudes

In connection with this, the first thing which must be realised is that an attitude always fulfils some need, or set of needs, of the individual. Attitudes cannot be imposed on a person by social conditioning, by capitalist propaganda, or by any other means, unless they do hold some definite functional value for that person. All the attitudes which a person holds actually perform some service in that person's life, and any attempt to change them must take full account of that fact.

The second important point is that some attitudes are being constantly reinforced by influences in the general social milieu, whereas others may only find support in relatively inaccessible situations. The attitudes held by the majority of people in the group to which an individual feels he belongs—these are what constitute the major portion of what we call "social pressure". Of course, it doesn't even need to be the actual majority by direct count—it will be enough that the individual believes it to be the majority. The attitudes of individuals in a group are connected in much the same sort of way as the attitudes of a separate individual—see para 2 above. It is these factors which explain the phenomenon which most of us have encountered, of arguing a point with someone, making the point, getting him to agree, and thinking we have changed his whole attitude on the question. Next time we see him, he puts the same arguments he did before; one reminds him that he had agreed to something different; and one finds that his memory of the argument seems quite strange, and quite divorced from one's own impression. There should be nothing in this to cause the least surprise, and yet it is usually found to be a source of great annoyance.

TREETOPS

A few party members will be going to Treetops for the week-end Sept. 11th and 12th. Those desiring to go—please write direct to Mrs. Plant, Treetops Holiday Camp, Farley Green, near Guildford and reserve accomodation. Do not write to me or Com D'Arcy as it is being done unofficially and direct, and don't decide to come on Sept. 11th if it is fine for there will be no accommodation if it is not booked soon.

A small party of us are going to ramble from Dorking on the Saturday morning Sept. 11th to Treetops. Details will be on the notice board.

H. JARVIS.

The third important point is that, as attitudes involve perceptions, cognitions, emotions and motivations, any attempt at large-scale changes in attitude must work through numerous means. Change in the objective environment will be necessary, as well as changes in the facts and fact-relations presented verbally to the individual. However, just because we can enumerate and define and in principle control the factors which it is necessary to change, we can be sure that inadequate or detrimental attitudes are not due to "the contrariness of human nature" or other unchangeable—because indefinable—factors.

So long as attempts to change attitudes are confined to verbal propaganda, therefore, they can only move individuals who are, for various personal reasons, ready to accept the new way of looking at things. Only where other influences co-operate in the same direction can verbal propaganda have any mass effect. This is what is meant by the old tag—"Nothing is as strong as an idea whose hour has come."

Ultimately, it is true to say that changing any one attitude held by the broad mass of the people means altering, to a greater or lesser extent, all the attitudes which are similarly held. And this means a complete change in culture. This view is put forward by such a great thinker as Kurt Lewin, in his paper "Conduct, knowledge and acceptance of new values" (with P. Grabbe, 1945), and also by Krech and Crutchfield in their monumental "Theory and Problems of Social Psychology" (1948).

The Socialist View

It is very interesting to note here that science has confirmed the Socialist view. We have pointed out for many years that reforming this or that particular feature will not produce any of the marvellous results predicted by reformists, and have insisted that only a complete change in culture will fill the bill.

We may doubt, however, whether many Party members have really understood the position here. The assumption is still made that one can change attitudes without any major cultural change, and that the people with new outlooks will proceed to change the culture from top to bottom. Action based on this assumption, of course, leads to nothing but frustration.

The traditional Party view that the material conditions for Socialism are ripe, and that all that is needed is the adoption of Socialist ideas (those damned *ideas* rearing their ugly heads again), the fantastic notion that all the changes taking place in Capitalism are irrelevant to the establishment of Socialism—these must go if the Party is to be more than impotent.

A party writer has satirized this woefully inadequate view very well:—

> "Since 1904 all that has happened adds up to nothing—fundamentally. Corporative State, Welfare State, New Deal, Nazism, Titoism, Russian, Chinese, Indian and African revolutions—these have

motion, but no direction, for they are capitalism—fundamentally. The new industrial revolution of spaceships and atoms, of plastics, cybernetics and electronic brains, and the new industrial, political and international integrations which accompany them—the mind staggers at the dizzy speed with which, today, nothing happens (fundamentally)."

He might have added modern management methods to the list; I am thinking particularly of the line of work pioneered by Elton Mayo which attempts to apply under capitalism the sort of attitude to work which will be most common under Socialism, and has achieved tremendous success in actual practice.

We must start thinking about these things and wondering whether perhaps they do have something to do with Socialism after all. In a further article I want to deal with the question of when a change is a fundamental change, and when it is not.

Socialist articles have often ended — "Speed the Day!" Some of us—soon, I hope, most of us—can begin to see that there is no question of speeding the day; because *this is the day.*

J. C. ROWAN

THE S.P. AND PARLIAMENT

In his article "Socialists and Parliament" Comrade Carnell gives a number of reasons why he thinks that socialists must get control of Parliament in order to establish socialism. His arguments are similar to those he put forward in a previous article (Forum, Nov. 1953) when he defended coercion and authority in a socialist society.

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In his most recent article (June, 1954) he writes:—

> "We, who wish to establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of living in the interest of all, *must needs make a law to this effect.*"

But why? Surely, when the "immense majority" are conscious of the need to replace capitalism by a new society—socialism—they will not need to bother making laws. When the mass of people are thinking about, and working for, a completely new way of life such as socialism will be, they won't even give Parliament a thought. There will be too many important things to think about pertaining to the problems facing the future socialist society.

If, of course, as I pointed out previously, Carnell or others envisage a recalcitrant minority of well-organised counter-revolutionaries, then of course they would need to control the armed forces of the state, through Parliament. But I contend that this would be impossible (and it is up to them to prove me wrong). It assumes that all or almost all the capitalists, *because* of *their understanding of socialism* will be hostile to it, and that a section of the workers, *because* of *their lack of understanding of socialism* will also be hostile to it. And that these people will be in a position to disrupt the establishment of the new society.

This is a very dangerous point of view. It is typical of the bolshevik attitude towards revolution. The Socialist Party has always claimed that the working-class must emancipate itself; that the capitalist class cannot do it for them; that they are not likely to do it for them anyway. But we have never stated that *no capitalists* can *understand* and *desire* socialism. Neither can we say that sections of the community will be in a position of *active hostility* to socialism. That large numbers of people *may not* be *in favour* may be true. But there will be *absolutely nothing* that they can do when the majority refuse to be exploited any longer; when they refuse to work for wages—except to not work themselves; and this they will soon get fed-up with. Everyone who is mentally and physically capable (ex-capitalists included) will, in my opinion, be doing some useful work within a month or so after the establishment of socialism—and there will be no privilege groups, authority or coercion!

The only reason for keeping some form of Labour Exchange would be to give people information and help in finding work to do. Not to convert non-existent idlers to the idea of doing useful work!

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In his last paragraph Comrade Carnell says that after the establishment of socialism the S.P. will control distribution, "make rules and enforce them" and "use the already existing machinery for this purpose."

Now, either Comrade Carnell is a very recent member of the Party and does not fully understand our case, or the S.P.G.B. had some very peculiar ideas when he joined; because, to my knowledge, no Party speaker has ever said that the S.P.G.B. would exist in a socialist society. *We have always said that the S.P.G.B. would go out of existence with the establishment of socialism.*

The more I read of Carnell's ideas on socialism, with his Home Secretaries, Ministries of Fine Arts, all the paraphernalia of the State, the more I dislike it. If what he has defined in his two articles (Nov. 1953 and June, 1954) is socialism, then I'm 'agin' it!

If, on the other hand, socialism is a free, classless, world-wide (not the "Socialist Society of Great Britain", Comrade Carnell), equalitarian society, then the use of force—and that means the armed forces of the state—and violence, can take no part.

When the masses abolish capitalism they will not need the armed forces as "an instrument of emancipation," and they won't bother about Parliament either.

Peter E. Newell.

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.

CORRESPONDENCE

Comrades,

There is a minority in the Party putting forward the view that those members who disagree with the Declaration of Principles should not remain in the Party.

At first glance their statement appears quite reasonable, but when we look further into it we can see the way in which a slight modification renders it far from harmless.

> Members of the Socialist Party who have shown they have a real understanding of the Party case, who want socialism, and are willing to accept Party discipline, but who have come to doubt the truth or value of some or all of a statement formulated in 1904, should be expelled from the Party.

This is a very different kettle of fish. But on examination of the first statement and discussion of it with the comrades concerned; we find it is the second statement which they are in fact defending. Let us examine the first statement together with a recapitulation of what has been the Party attitude to disagreement.

(continued on back page)

THE NATURE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

7 — The Socialist Movement (continued)

The Socialist movement still has an idealist attitude to the class struggle with which it is pre-occupied, holding that the class struggle is the dynamic of history—mistaking class motives for the social motor—and that between successive class victories societies remain fundamentally unchanged. Underneath the verbal dialectic is a discontinuous, catastrophic, quixotic and highly personalised outlook on history and society.

Yet evolution is so much simpler than Genesis. And until we recognise that social evolution is continuous (because the motor is accumulation of artefacts) and that its direction is foreseeable as the integrations ('social relations') immanent in this accretion of products, we do not begin the work of prognostication which alone makes socialist ideas an agent of Socialism. The job of the scientific revolutionary is to further the precipitation, out of particles in social solution, of the new grand integration by sharpening the awareness that the particles are in fact thus coalescing. Some measure of what we *wish* must already be knocking, or it would not be wishable. But the wish is offspring not father to the fact, and in acknowledging necessity outside men's wishes we have a world to win and nothing to lose but our apostolic status. Meanwhile, political partisanship, like other forms of organised religion, repulses science. Hence, for us, like the planets in feudal times, "each society has its own laws of development"! We do not understand social change as issuing from increase of products, nor, therefore, capitalist production as increasing the momentum (out of mass of product) of the process which has been continuous for half a million years, held to its socialist orbit by social man.

As we do not understand the labour theory of history in general, we do not understand its particular capitalist application, the labour theory of value. Girded with a wish, we will create Socialism in defiance of nature, unaware (and unwilling to be aware) that capital itself moves in a socialist direction. Scientifically imancipated from moralism, we see in the accumulation of capital only its more wicked concentration into fewer hands, not the qualitative changes contained in this increase not the expropriation of individual capitals which give rise to capitalism and which capitalism accelerates. We see the aggregation but not the integration which depersonalises production property and diffuses power and privilege. We see quantity of trees but not not quality of wood.

Are Workers Worse Off?

Moreover, in urging expropriation of the capitalist class, as the limit of our purpose, we merely extend to its arithmetical limit the Communist claim for a bigger share. True (as a further step in the evolution of the Socialist movement), there is an implicit undercurrent of concern with the human quality of socialist life, but it is secondary, sentimental and suspect, subordinate in propaganda to the slogan "take the lot," the Socialist concept still Communist-cocooned in "food, clothing and shelter", "standard of living", "poverty and insecurity", and "increasing misery". Thus our theory of value is conceived in the merely quantitative terms required to expose exploitation. We deal with magnitude of value, surplus value, unequal shares of value, and do so very ably, but always in a closed system which ignores the increasing proliferation of use-values progressively the undermining the value relations of society from the inside, from the very heart of capital, as a necessity of capital.

Horatio's treatment of value in the May issue ("Are the workers better off?") excellent of its kind, is typical. He shows that the workers are worse off in that they receive in wages a continually falling proportion of the values they produce. This happens (briefly) because competition between capitals compels a rising rate of exploitation, achieved by increasing relative surplus value, by raising the composition of capital (by taking on more machinery at a rate faster than than the taking on of more hands). What is ignored, however, is that a rising rate of exploitation compels a rising standard of living, and 'compels' in every determinist sense of the word, for this higher rate of exploitation is nothing other than the production of more use-values each containing less value: the values of commodities fall, while their mass increases, and the value likewise of the commodity labour-power falls while the mass of use-values required to reproduce it increases. Thus the workers receive as wages a rising mass of use-values containing a falling proportion of the value they produce, and this movement inheres in the mode of production: a rising standard of living is a necessary reciprocal of rising relative surplus value — they are the *same thing* from different angles.

"Increasing misery" is a piece of Communist claptrap. If misery is to be measured, it can be measured only in terms of things enjoyed or not, that is, used or not—in terms, that is, of use-values. And it is the continuous proliferation of use-values, pressing up the standard of living (and narrowing the differences between better and worse-off in relation to mass of use-values), which kills the force of exploitation propaganda in terms of poverty and misery.

But we are stuck with the dead horse. For as with "capital", so it is with "value": our half-Communist version of revolution does not let us see the Socialist direction of the effects on value-relations (in the institutions of class, property, law, religion, family) brought about by the increasing mass of use-values in which value is embodied.

Profusion of use-values undermines power and privilege as between classes and individuals by reducing the social importance of social differences arising from different shares of value. Value, which historically emerges

from use out of aggregation of wealth, suborns use to the service of profit, making use a mere vehicle for expanding value, and thereby promotes the proliferation of use-values which eventually strangles value. For capital's appetite for value means the continual displacement of expensive prototypes by cheaper alternatives. Velocipedes and time-pieces, cars and cameras, typewriters and telephones, are obvious examples of what start as expensive luxuries and become commonplace necessities—any example will do, because it applies to commodities in general. Through profusion of cheapening products, the more universal accessibility of use-values, profit and property and privilege and power and politics dig their own graves. For one man's capacity to consume is much the same as another's, and whatever the difference of wealth, in values, the cheapening of commodities means the more equal accessibility of use-values, in relation to capacity to enjoy, between one sun-up and the next.

Capitalism accelerates the equal diffusion of use-values, because cheapening of products is capital's specific mode of existence. In proliferation of artefacts capitalism differs only quantitatively from earlier societies (since increased productivity inheres in the human productive act which produces the surplus which raises productivity), but by accelerating the more equal diffusion of use-values it increases the social equality of persons. In the earlier, less productive stages of commercial society, class domination has a more awful majesty, a greater personal and autocratic impact. Of all class systems, capitalism is the most egalitarian, humane and democratic, capitalist power the least patriarchal, personal, arbitrary and autocratic, capitalist privilege the most vicarious, anonymous, and irrelevant.

Rising Standards

Socialists we claim to be, and *dialectical* materialists, yet we seem to have a poor sense of social metabolism, of the subtly organic relationships between products and behaviour, and remain only the ablest exponents of value theory in the narrowest economic sense, allowing the sterile dualism which argues the precedence of ideas or economics to obscure the fact that both are co-existent and congruent aspects of the current sum of artefacts. Our social vision is too narrowly blinkered between exploitation and misery to see the increasingly humane relations of everyday life as counterpart of the increasing mass of use-values and its concomitant relatively more equal diffusion of them. We are happy to show that if there is a fall in brewers' profits, the tea merchants are making more, but are little concerned to ask what is happening to a society where the ubiquitous caff has displaced the streetful of Saturday night drunks. Humane relations are the relations of sufficient equality in everyday life, rooted in the certitude, independent of another's handout, of a sufficient modicum of everyday things. In our own short time we have seen the continuation of the increase in humane behaviour, of respect for the person, of equality of consideration. All the current bogies that bother and bewitch the 'public mind' — "breakdown of marriage", "teddy boys", "child cruelty", "perverts"—all can be shown to spell rising standards of respect for persons, wider toleration of individuation, increasing equality of consideration independent of size ,age, shape, colour, sex, income or property, all reflect the receding of repressive sanctions and power attitudes and privilege relations, washed away by the flood of use-values piped like common water into every mouth.

Obsessed with value, and the need for an external act of expropriation, we ignore the dynamic, Socialism-creative effects of the increasing mass of use-values which dissolve value-relations from the inside, by more and more equal diffusion of use-values in relation to mass of value. Soft drinks displace hard, and softer manners the harsh and autocratic, as between parent and child, teacher and pupil, foreman and gang, sergeant and rookie, customer and counterhand, mistress and maid, ruler and ruled, class and class, in proportion as productive power, panting for profit, showers indiscriminately on all an increasing deluge of cheap use-values, on quick or slow, bright or beautiful, black or white,male or female, young or old, dissolving the power of persons to withhold or bestow, dissolving the cruelties of charity and the stupidities of status, changing social relations essentially, fundamentally, universally, continuously and consistently in the direction of socialism, daily and hourly announcing the possibility, necessity, imminence and shape of socialist society, and offering a gift of the only propaganda that can hasten it—acknowledgment that still the world moves, and that the revolution is the conscious summing up of its direction—while instead we enter the field of political action to play out a charade of St. George and the Dragon called Clause Eight and Class Struggle.

F. EVANS

(to be continued)

HEREDITY AND ABILITY

A further reply to Comrade F. Evans

On thinking.

F. Evans chides me for being careless. He writes (June '54) —"The carelessness which permits him to say in one breath that we think with words, and in the next that we think with tools (especially as in fact we think with our brains)".

I wrote (June '53). "Thinking in man almost exclusively involves the use of words . . ." "Man, by means of a social inheritance of technique of his own making, thinks with his tools."

Evans' comment about the role of the brain in thinking appears to square admirably with the somewhat narrow mechanistic biology of the 19th Century. My alleged carelessness however, seems to have led me into good company as the following quotes show.

(*a*) "Let us, however, not forget that words are but tools of the mind . . . It is by means of words that the expansion of the human mind has become possible: but words may distort and limit thought and ideas, as well as expanding them and promoting their efficiency."—("*The Science of Life*" Bk. VIII, p. 1254—Wells, Huxley Wells).—and again on p. 1255 :

"For certain purposes mathematics is the best of all languages, because it enables us to think in the most general terms possible. It is only with the aid of the 'words' and ideas of mathematical symbolism that the physicists have been able to make many of their recent discoveries about the structure of matter and the perplexing nature of the space-time universe."

(*b*) "Really language is essentially a social product"—p. 28. "The capacity for what is termed 'abstract thinking'—probably a prerogative of the human species—depends largely upon language"—(p. 31., "*Man makes himself*" V. Gordon Childe).

(*c*) "We do not think with the brain, or at least as we have seen, not with the brain alone. Thought requires the whole body, the whole activity, and even the whole of social activity. Man, whose relations with the world have been characterised since his origin by tools of his own making, thinks with his tools"—(p. 172, "*Biology and Marxism*", M. Prenant, Professor of Zoology, The Sorbonne, University of Paris).

(*d*) "What it amounts to is that by the use of words we learn to see the connection between things that are not obviously related to each other. In fact, like all tools, words lead to the satisfaction of needs in indirect ways."—(p. 91, "*Doubt and Certainty in Science*", J. Z. Young, Professor of Anatomy, University College, London).

Perhaps I was not so careless after all.

Causality.

I stated that every difference is not a cause. Comrade considers this an error and says—"every difference is a cause of something."

Evans' particular difficulty here is that he evidently does not appreciate that while difference may have a subjective significance, we are concerned only with differences between things in casual relationship. Thus I can be aware of difference between a pebble on the sea bed in Sydney Harbour, and the half-crown in my pocket. But the two objects are not in any direct causal relationship, one with the other. Evans considers it a valid criticism of my examples of causal relationships to point out that only part of the effects are the same. What escapes his observation is the fact that in every example of a causal chain of events we care to consider, we are dealing only with causes and effects which *are* partial; precisely because we are abstracting from a totality of causation, in which no particular series of causally related events exist in isolation.

Leadership.

The crux of Evans' naïve treatment of the leadership issue was his statement (April'53)—"The absence of any need for it rests on the irrelevance of differences of ability, innate or acquired, to the common capacity of ordinary people to understand and want what is understood and wanted by other ordinary people—Party members." Boiled down this just means that where common qualities exist, qualities which are different are irrelevant to them. A fair example of begging the question I think; and repeated two lines later in his analogy of differences of gait being irrelevant to the common capacity to walk, it being quite clear that the term 'gait' includes by definition the capacity to walk, anyway.

I thought it clear that what I considered important were not differences in ability in general, but difference in mental capacity. Evans (April '53) recognises that leadership is not needed if 'a common capacity to understand and want what is understood exists'. Also that the understanding of Socialism requires the existence of common sense. Mathematics tells us that that which is *common* to all terms is *equal* in all terms. Thus the capacity for common sense, being common to all is equal in all. Absence of leadership is dependent on an equal capacity for understanding. Leadership exists i.e., is necessary, in those organisations where, in their constituent members, that capacity is undeveloped. Differences in ability are irrelevant, but any difference in the ability to understand is relevant to this issue. In case I should be called to order for equating a *common* capacity with an *equal* capacity, I put the question to Comrade Evans—Is there a sense which transends common sense? Or alternatively—Can some individuals receive through their genetic endowment the capacity for common sense in a somewhat 'diluted' form?

Variation and Natural Selection.

In no statement have I implied that I reject natural selection. Natural selection is one factor of biological evolution, but Man unique in that he is undifferentiated for function, has largely escaped from the filtering process of selection. We can see this when we observe that for most living forms variation has followed divergent radiating lines; whilst in Man variation is reticulate, due to recombination of genetic structures. Assuming that Evans regards natural selection as a considerable force in the evolution of civilised man, it is difficult to follow his conclusion that variation enriches the possibilities of co-operative labour. Natural selection is essentially a conservative force, operating through competition and survival value in general. Further there is abundant evidence that intra-specific selection i.e., selection between genetically different types within a species, is totally or almost totally, of no use to the species as a whole. But I do not accept the suggestion that there is in general any selecting of human types in the evolution of civilised man. Nor, we find, do leading authorities on human evolution. (*see* Huxley, Haldane, Prenant).

Apparently what Evans had in mind when he wrote (Nov. '52)—"the rich genetically determined variation in innate individual abilities"—"a myriad multiplication of opposable thumbs" are the variations resulting from crossing and recombination. He could not have meant mutations, because these are rare events—not myriad multiplications. But the basis of biological evolution at the genetic level *is* the mutation. Moreover, not only is the mutation a comparatively rare event, but the majority of them present disadvantageous features, particularly in species which have had a long evolutionary history. For in their cases advantageous mutations would generally have already been incorporated in the genetic endowment of the species as a whole. Thus evolution shows a series of adaptive radiations ending in blank walls.

Evolutionary progress being defined as greater control over, and greater independence of environmental change; all the possible progressive mutants within each level of organisation and environment have been offered and accepted, ending either in stable species or extinction. Man can by selective breeding produce new varieties of organisms, as he frequently does in the laboratory and on the wider field of agriculture and animal stock breeding, but this Nature alone cannot do. Only in and through Man is progress being continued: in Man, who possesses as Huxley points out, 'a biologically unique capacity for tradition, providing a modificational substitute for genetic change.'

Man's increasing control over and independence of changes in environment are in general non-genetic in character.

RAY BOTT

PUBLICITY RESEARCH

Could members kindly send to the address below any polls or surveys of public, group or area opinion that they may see to:—

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PEN TO PAPER

The intention of these notes is to help writers for the Party. That does not mean only potential contributors to the "Socialist Standard"; it means, I think, all members. Rightly, we think of oral expression as the chief means of communicating ideas—so much so that we have a habit of saying "verbal" when we really mean "oral". Nevertheless, we all write about Socialism at times, and there is every reason why, like talking about Socialism, it should be done well.

After saying what this is about, it is worth saying what it is *not* about. I am concerned with the craft, not the art, of writing. If you can see an overlap, that's fine; the fact remains that art consists mainly of communicating feeling, and our sort of writing has the different aim of informing and explaining. As I see it, it is a matter chiefly of workmanship.

A lot of people are sufficiently misled by the talk about art to imagine that a good writer simply sits down and turns it out. Don't believe it. The only man I knew who claimed he did that was the worst regular contributor the *Standard* had in recent years (no longer with us—still, no names). For what it is worth, my own way of working is something like this. First I make and arrange copious notes, as if I were preparing a lecture. Usually I find I have insufficient knowledge of some of the points, and have to spend a day in the British Museum or some other library looking up the things I don't know. Then I write it out on foolscap, crossing out every other line, until I am satisfied that I've said all I want to say. I copy the article and go through it to weed out vaguenesses and ambiguities and look for better phraseology; and finally I type it out as the finished job. There is no universal method of writing articles, however, and what suits me may be hopeless for somebody else. The important thing is that, whatever one's approach, there is no analgesic for the throes of composition.

If I were devising maxims for writers, the one at the top would be: Don't write unless you have something to say. The only reason I know for writing is to tell something or explain something to people. "I want to write" means nothing until it is expanded to "I want to write about . . ." There is scope enough: socialists, after all, are people with a different viewpoint on most things, and the world is our parish. That does not mean any socialist can write about anything—on the contrary, another golden rule should be to keep within the limits of one's own knowledge. There are some things I should not dare to write about, because I know too little about them; I can only say the boldness of writers who raise two-thousand-word edifices on the basis of a smattering amazes me. One other thing about choice of subject—it ought to be worth while. It is not difficult to find something a Cabinet Minister has said and sneer at it, or to quote a paragraph from the "Reader's Digest" and say it confirms our case; most times, however, these articles are not worth even the small amount of trouble their writers have put into them. When an item of the sort seems too good to be missed, the best way of using it is as a reference in an article on a larger topic.

Subject and subject-matter are not the same thing; or, having a subject, you must gather accurate, interesting—and therefore carefully chosen—information about it. The worst way to "gather" information is to paraphrase factual items from papers and magazines—i.e., to set up as a journalist on the back of another journalist whose journalism you say you despise. If you are borrowing, say so. Facilities for fact-gathering are available in most areas. The public library is the obvious and convenient place, and in London there are several very good reference libraries. By specifying research on a particular topic you can get a one-day pass into the British Museum Library or the Newspaper Library at Colindale, and there are several small libraries with special collections.

So much for subject-matter. In its presentation, good grammar and usage are essential. Some people argue the reverse, that you can play hell and Tommy with the rules and still say what you mean. They are wrong. Grammar is the logic of a language, and gives precision that is not otherwise attainable. Precision is less necessary in speech, where hearing is helped by sight and words may be spilled usually without harm being done; in writing—particularly explanatory writing—it is all-important. Grammar is a bogey to most people because an elementary education is too brief to give any sort of mastery of it, but there are a few intelligently written books about it. The best I know is Eric Partridge's "English: A Course for Human Beings". It's expensive, but most libraries have it. At this point it may be worth mentioning the books which I think are necessary to a writer. He must have a dictionary (the most popular is the Concise Oxford, but Chamber's Twentieth Century has much more in it) and he should have Roget's Thesaurus, which provides the right word or phrase for almost everything. The more books he has in addition to these, the better.

Perfect phraseology is a consummation devoutly to be wished; the avoidance of bad or hackneyed phraseology is a more modest but most desirable aim. I should like to see some expressions banned from the "Standard" for a very, very long time: "bloodbath" for a war, "sheeplike" for compliant workers, "woolly-minded" for idealists, and so on. And there are the too-often-meaningless asides: "obviously" followed by something which certainly isn't obvious, "needless to say", another lie, and "of course", which can usually be reckoned the precursor to an absolute *non sequitur*. The best phraseology is the clearest and most concise, and weighty terms seldom help in that direction. Nor do long words: too many people think "commence" and "terminate" are better than "begin" and "end". They aren't. As a socialist is reputed to have said to a ponderous speaker, call a spade a spade and not a metallic implement for penetrating the earth's crust.

Such matters as tone and style arise from the consideration of phraseology. Tone is the attitude, real or assumed, of the writer to his readers, and it is extremely important to a writer about Socialism. When you are being critical of people and beliefs it is only too easy to sound supercilious, self-satisfied or just contemptuous, but none of these approaches wins anyone over. On the other hand, a patronizing, sure-we-understand-each other-John tone implies just as clearly that you have a low opinion of the reader. There is no question of "adopting" a tone to strike the right note, any more than you can borrow a style. Both are integral parts of any piece of writing, and have meaning only when they are at work with the subject-matter.

Innumerable chapters have been written about style without anybody becoming much wiser. More than anything else, it is the written expression of personality. Therefore, try to write as you speak rather than develop a special manner for writing. A

good style is never obtrusive; its effect is of making the subject-matter pleasant to read, without drawing attention to itself. I have said a style cannot be borrowed, but every writer is influenced to some extent by those he has read, and there is great value in reading the masters of style. Probably the best modern writer in this respect is George Orwell—a beautifully clear, direct style, almost athletic in its easy, unhampered movement. Whatever else one thinks of Orwell, he is good to read. E. M. Forster is very good; and so, in a different way, is Jack London—economical with words, reporter-like and forceful. Farther back, Charles Lamb is worth reading as a stylist (and for pleasure), and among the ancients there was no one better than Tacitus—no word in his writing that is not usefully employed. And, as we are interested in writing about Socialism, it is worth mentioning that the "Socialist Standard" has had good stylists, too: R. W. Housley was a particularly able writer, and I hope H will not think I am buttering him up by referring to him, too.

Of the many devices for appealing to readers, humour is the one which tempts writers most. Don't do it. If you want to know why, try counting how many successful funny writers there have been. Oral humour is not so difficult because tone of voice, facial expression and the mood of the moment all help it. Max Miller in person is uproarious, but his jokes in print (those which *are* printable) fall flat. Witty comment is a different thing, but again, it isn't easy; and even when the wit can be seen to sparkle, it is only valuable when it is used to sharpen a comment, and not as an end in itself.

There are a good many verbal devices which can heighten effect and even, used skilfully enough, contribute to style; most of them have long been classified as "figures of speech." It is worth knowing about them, and a text-book such as Partridge's will explain and illustrate them. The presentation of contrasts and analogies and the construction of phrases that will really tell are worth all that can be put into them.

Finally, a writer needs to keep writing, to be self-critical and to obtain criticism. Show your writing to other people and don't argue with what they say about it. One useful means of self-criticism is to put away or forget something you have written and read it a few months later; one way or the other, you'll be surprised. And there is a writers' class at the Head Office every year—like all the Party's classes, it is very good.

R. COSTER

(Correspondence. Continued from page 67)

When an individual presents himself for membership of the Party the Branch concerned examine him to see whether he has any serious misconceptions about the Party case. In no case however, is the examination conducted along the lines of—"Do you adhere to the first Principle?" etc. In all cases, it is an examination of understanding, not of mere adherence.

The Party does apply a more systematic test to those who may be going to represent us on the platform, or at debates etc. There have been several versions of the speakers' test since it was first instituted in the early days of the Party's existence, and in all cases it was and is an examination of understanding, not of blind acceptance.

From its earliest days then, the Party has been concerned not with acceptance, but with *understanding what we are accepting.* And when we come to look at "Principles and Policy" we find that it is not *mere* acceptance that is required after all. We don't want someone who accepts but someone who "intelligently accepts" (p. 27) the principles of socialism. "The strength of the revolutionary Party (p. 26) depends upon the number who understand what socialism means, and whose adherence is founded upon this understanding."

Understanding differs from acceptance in that one can understand without accepting, and can accept without understanding. It also differs in that understanding involves a questioning attitude, a truth seeking attitude, a critical attitude which acceptance does not. And there is no way of preventing a questioning, critical, truth seeking attitude—which we encourage people to apply to all other phenomena—from being applied to the D. of P. itself.

As it happens the Party has recorded its opinion of the correct position to adopt when the situation arises. In 1949, over the case of Comrade Ross, the vote was quite definite that holding views contrary to the D. of P. was not in itself action detrimental to the Party's interests. Hackney Branch at the following conference, tried to have this decision reversed, without success. The same question was raised at this year's conference, with the same result. Quite consistently, then, for at least five years, the Party has explicitly laid down, by a conference vote, that remaining in the Party does not depend on acceptance of the D. of P.

At every point, therefore, where Party practice, whether in the past or at present, has touched this matter of acceptance of the D. of P. it has treated it as of only partial importance.

Now a minority of members are trying to change all this. They are trying to overturn the generally accepted and orthodox view that socialist understanding is the all-important condition of membership. And in order to do so, they are being forced to maintain. That the whole Party case is summed up in the D. of P.—in fact, the D. of P. *is* the Party case. Having done that, they can now go on to say that (*a*) those who question the D. of P. are opposed to the socialist case; and (*b*) those who criticise the D. of P. are opposed to the Socialist Party. Those who are not satisfied with the D. of P. are then, anti-socialist.

This however, will not stand up to critical examination. The socialist case contains for more than the D. of P. Each phrase in the D. of P. sums up a whole volume of theory, each of which is more fundamental than the D. of P. itself, just as a book is far more important than its title. The D. of P. is based on the work of Marx and Engels. Other pioneers, including William Morris, have made their contribution to the Party case. Both historically and theoretically, the D. of P. is the visible tip of a vast iceberg. Historically because of the long history of socialist ideas and theoretically, because the D. of P. is an up to date expression of the general theory of the class struggle, which in turn is a particular expression of historical materialism, which in turn is one application of the general world view of dialectical materialism. All these things are more fundamental to socialist understanding than the D. of P. In fact, if the D. of P. is equated with the socialist case, there were no socialists before the S.P.G.B.—which is fantastic.

From the above it can be seen that socialist understanding and accepting the D. of P. are not the same thing. It is the Socialist Party that we joined not the D. of P. Party. Socialism as has been shown, is more fundamental than the D. of P.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the requirements for membership of the Party, and membership of course involves speaking for the Party are as follows:—

1. Understanding of the Party case.
2. Desire to help in the achievement of Socialism.
3. Willingness to accept Party discipline.

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