

# FORUM

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SIXPENCE

## WILL THERE BE MASS PRODUCTION

*"It took both time and experience before the workers could learn to distinguish between machinery itself and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks, not against the material instruments of production, but against the particular social form in which these instruments are used."—Capital, Vol. I, p. 468.*

WHEN I was at the stage of thinking that the D. of P. contained the potted wisdom of the ages, I remember speculating on the implications of some of its phrases. "Privilege to equality and slavery to freedom"—well, equality and freedom are not very precise words, but the ideas behind them have been thoroughly thrashed out and there is general agreement about what they imply. But can we say the same about the comfort that is to replace poverty?

I must confess that I have always supposed that, even if our material standard of comfort would not, under Socialism, be very much higher than now, at least it would not be appreciably lower. Our old No. 9 pamphlet confirms this impression by using the phrase (p 13) "in order that plenty and leisure may be the portion of all . . ." But now an idea has developed in the Party that causes me to doubt whether this portion is still on the menu. It seems that some of us have been taking it for granted that some goods will continue to be mass-produced—and this apparently harmless assumption is challenged by the opposition of some comrades to mass production on principle.

### What is Mass Production ?

As is inevitable in discussing such questions, there is a certain amount of confusion over meanings attached to terms used. We are told what Ford says mass production is, and can read other statements about it by various authors. For the purpose of this article, however, I shall take the more recent usages given in Chambers's Encyclopaedia: —

- (a) Standardisation of machine processes . . . with the aid of semi-skilled machine-minders in place of skilled craftsmen working in smaller groups.
- (b) Specialisation of factories to a narrow range of processes, or even to a single process, on a basis of intensive mechanisation.
- (c) Standardisation of products so as to . . . allow long runs of standard components to be produced and to be assembled by such methods as the 'assembly line'.

What, then is the row all about ? Opponents of mass production hold that it involves excessive division of labour, monotonous, repetitive work, and that its prime object is to save time—obviously

these are cogent points. Further, however, it is argued that mass production necessarily involves pacemaking, is exclusive to Capitalism, and is inseparable from the existence of large towns. These are more controversial statements with which I, for one, beg to differ.

First, the question of division of labour. Marx had a lot to say about its harmful effects, and many of his criticisms are still valid, though more attention is now paid (for economic reasons) to the problem of wear and tear on the worker than a century ago. A more modern condemnation of excessive specialisation appeared in the *Sunday Chronicle*, 24.2.52.

"A recent analysis of workers in a Sheffield factory revealed that in the course of their work, 91% of them used only a small part of their nervous system. To stave off the monotony, their off-duty hours were given solely to such feverish pleasures as speedway and jive-dancing, and their nervous systems were suffering accordingly."

This is the sort of thing that the opponents of mass production are concerned about—and I am 100% with them. Of course, society must devise some way of overcoming this problem, but let us be careful about what it is we are opposing. Division of labour is harmful when excessive, but it is not necessarily harmful in itself. Suppose we do make a principle of opposing specialisation on the grounds that it fragments labour. Where does fragmentation end and wholeness begin?

I know very little about farm machinery, but am told about a threshing machine that requires about a dozen workers each doing a certain job. After an hour or so on one part

of the machine, they can change places and so avoid boredom. There seems no reason why it should not be possible, in a society in which people control their own conditions of work, for a machine to relieve arduous toil and yet not entail boredom.

### Saving Time

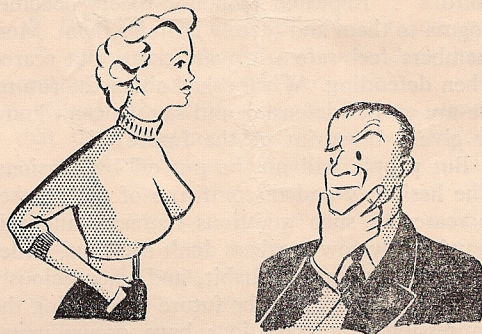
Another point is that mass production is said to involve monotonous, repetitive work. So it does. But so does a great deal of non-mass production. I wouldn't like to argue that writing figures in a ledger all day is much less repetitive than operating an automatic machine. A case can even be made out that it is more disconcerting to have a slight difference in the details of a job than to have a completely repetitive one, since in the first it is not possible to allow your mind to wander on to other topics while working. But, at any rate, it is obvious that mass production cannot be equated with monotonous work.

Now we come to the question of saving time. Opponents of mass production say its only object is to save time. I accept that. Time is worth saving on any job, under any system, because it enables us to undertake other jobs or to enjoy leisure. There is no greater condemnation of Capitalism than the prevalence of the feeling of not knowing what to do with leisure.

Those who repeat the jibe "so you save time on one job in order to save time on another" reveal a prejudice that most workers cannot conceivably know what to do with themselves when they are not working. It is often said that under Socialism the line between work and leisure will blur—but it won't vanish. People will still want to save time from productive work in order to have more time to enjoy as many as possible of the myriad experiences that this world has to offer.

### Making More Work

It is curious that those who argue in favour of abandoning mass production imagine that this will result in people doing more things. Let us take an example (with arbitrary figures) to see how this would work out. Suppose one



Mass Produced



in every 100 now spends his working day baking bread or making machinery to bake bread. Smaller bread-baking units might mean that as many as one in 5 (or 20 times more people) would have to put in a minimum of 2 hours at it. But there are many other jobs that need to be done. At present there is, broadly speaking, one person to one daily job. If only half these jobs were done, but there were, on average, 10 times as many people doing each one, isn't it obvious that we should have to spend longer than now in achieving even to-day's working-class standard of comfort? Instead of spending several lots of 2 hours producing for a small group, why should not *some of us* do one 2-hour shift producing for a large group?

Then the opponents of mass production say its essence is pacemaking. That is certainly a feature under Capitalism, but remember it is not the machine that sets the pace, but the boss. Excessive speed is the enemy, cries the curse-of-civilisation school. Of course we shall be able to take things easier under Socialism, but that won't be because we shall objectivise speed. Those who say speed is bad in itself are in the foolish position of having, as their ideal, the concept of standing still.

Mass production is exclusive to Capitalism,

we are told. Preface this statement with 'capitalist' and I have no quarrel with it. There are many ways in which mass production will be different under socialist conditions, but we make it harder to get our ideas across to others if we persist in indiscriminately negating features of Capitalism. We hear it stated that the motive of the airplane and ocean liner is commerce, yet the train and sailing-boat somehow escape similar condemnation. Is it not conceivable that *some* airplanes would be useful in a society without commerce?

### Needs and Plenty

To go fully into the question of mass production necessitating large towns would take us too far from our main subject, and deserves separate treatment.

We must, however, touch upon the satisfaction of needs, if only because we have been so accustomed to talking in terms of plenty and superabundance. What we mean, surely, is that we shall know what society is capable of producing, and shall want to participate accordingly. I cannot imagine the possibility of society knowing how to produce something in an efficient and unobjectionable way and yet deliberately choosing the roundabout method.

**It seems likely that many more people will want to have products that are more**

**fit for their purpose than are able to afford them to-day. Let us go one step further and suggest that society will virtually abandon mass production of individual things like suits and fruits pies. But why extend this to impersonal objects like pins and bricks? The quality of mass-produced goods is not necessarily lower than that of others, and in some cases it is higher. Quite often a combination of mass production and handcraft produces the best results.**

When I say that I find it difficult to see how society could meet all its need without some mass production, I get the feeble reply, "how did people manage before?" Any historian will tell you how they managed. In medieval times, household appliances were regarded as a luxury. A bed, table, couch, and possibly a chair satisfied the needs of people. I don't accuse the opponents of mass production of wanting to go back to those conditions. I merely suggest that their ideas are not so very far out of line with those conditions. If carpentry is your hobby, by all means make your own chairs and tables—but don't expect society to abandon *social* production of *most* chairs and tables.

S.R.P.

## THE FUTURE OF OUR PROPAGANDA

(Condensed from the letter originally sent by A. Turner to the E.C. 5.5.52, and subsequently circulated to branches.)

IN its early days, the Party was largely concerned with hammering out an object and declaration of principles, and then proving them correct against rival theories. Our opponents no longer have theories to prove their object—they can only apologise or try to justify their actions when in power.

The S.P.G.B. alone has an object—Socialism—with theory and analysis to prove its validity. In the past, members were compelled to know and expound socialist theory and economic analysis in order to refute rival theories. These were: Labour—Inevitability of gradualism; Communist—Dictatorship of the proletariat, intellectual minority action, etc.; Anarchist—The state and minority action and the futility of democracy.

These theories are now virtually finished. You seldom meet a Labour or Communist Party member with whom you can argue economic and political theory. In the 1920's and 30's our speakers had to know working class industrial history, Marxian economics and literature, about which they were constantly challenged by opponents. To-day these arguments have gone, and our case against them has been proved.

### New Motive for Analysis

But we are still challenging all comers to the

battlefield of theory. None are forthcoming, so our young members cannot improve their theory by meeting opposition. Some members, recognising this, see the need to take our proven theory into the wider fields of human society. The relative importance of these fields may be measured by their relevance to most people, e.g., marriage and the family.

Now the Party can turn its attention to what Socialism will be like, which historical conditions compelled it to deviate from. In this, the new motive for analysis and theory will be found. Immediately we describe Socialism in terms of human institutions and functions, we meet opposition. Also, the wider the description of Socialism, the greater the opportunity of making contact with people generally.

Most people are not interested in "Political politics". Repeated economic theory becomes dogma to them and merely irritates them. Most members feel safe when attacking, but scared when defending. When asked about the future, we are on the defensive and say we can't know or give a blueprint of the future.

But people will not be put off by evasions. The hesitancy and discomfiture of the speaker increases as such questions increase, and this may be why new speakers don't continue. Older speakers continue by habit, and unconsciously preclude questions of the future by creating the impression that conditions have grown worse and will continue to do so. This does not

fit the facts of experience, so people are unimpressed.

### Unexplored Fields

It is nonsense to say there is a general wave of apathy, reflected in the Party. Plenty of literature is being written on subjects closely allied with people's lives. Unfortunately the S.P.G.B. will not venture into them. Members say they are not interested in art, sex, morals, etc.—but this is politics without a purpose.

We tend to concentrate on attacking ideas that are on the way out. When a member does venture into hitherto almost unexplored fields, the hall is full, questions many and discussion lively. Such members are discouraged by talk of hobby horses, bees in bonnets, pretty pictures, etc.

**Yet it is these things that make our propaganda listened to and questioned sympathetically. It breaks down prejudice whilst the old propaganda erects more.**

Immediately our propaganda changes from just attacking Capitalism to describing Socialism, it will meet arguments and discussion about work, sex, morals, administration, etc. This means members will have to sharpen their knowledge of economic theory and also enter the field of social anthropology. Speakers will keep at it because their duty will become a pleasure, and the audience, from fearing you, will come to understand, admire and respect you.



## A CASE FOR CONCENTRATION

With the publication of FORUM, the opportunity is afforded of re-examining some of the views that seem to have become almost traditional in the Party. In this article I shall be particularly concerned with those that centre around its organisation in branches. It is my belief that just as the Party is always prepared to give reasons for its principles and policy to others, so it must be prepared to explain to itself why it holds the views it does on organisation and administration.

Whenever a branch has flourished in the past it always seems to have been taken for granted that it should try to split up, presumably with the object of forming two branches that would separately achieve more than the single one. But things seldom worked out that way. What usually happened was that some of the active members of one branch left it to form another in an adjoining area. For a time the total activity was increased, since a lot of work was put into building up the new branch. The paper membership was probably increased in this process, but there is no evidence that the mere act of splitting up increased the number of active members.

What we have to examine is whether, in the long run, the Party gains more benefit from aiming at concentration of members in branches, or at diffusing them in as many branches as possible. Of course, no such question arises in the cases of isolated branches like Bradford and Brighton. Our main concern must be with the 16 branches in the London area, and even of these, several are so distant from their nearest neighbour that my remarks do not concern them.

### Reasons for Splitting

First, why is it considered desirable that a branch containing more than about 50 members should try to form another one in an adjoining area? One argument is that some of its members live in that area and the new branch room would be more convenient for them; the implication is that they would be able to put in more work. Another point is that sympathisers living in the area might be encouraged to become members by reason of the proximity of the branch. These two I shall take to be the main arguments.

On the question of members living close to their branch meeting-places—is this really an important factor when only a couple of miles are involved? How many members can honestly say that such a distance make a difference to the amount of support they can give their branch? Active members certainly travel—so it must be the not-so-active ones that are affected. But, at the risk of giving offence to some of these, I suggest that the causes of their non-participation in branch activity are other than the distance of their branch meeting-place.

The other argument is easy enough to expose. When we put a notice in the S.S. asking those who are interested in forming a branch in a certain area to write in, how many replies do we get from non-members? None

—and the reason is simple. People don't join the Party because there is a branch in their area. The impact that the Party case has on them has nothing to do with the distance of its local branch. Of course, the conduct of this branch has an effect, but that is another matter.

### Branch Progress

Having examined some of the arguments in favour of larger numbers of branches, we can now turn to those in favour of larger numbers of members in branches. There are two main considerations here—increasing the amount and effectiveness of members' work for the Party, and creating a more inviting atmosphere into which sympathisers can enter.

**We must beware of comparing large branches as such with small branches as such. There is no question of the principle of the one being better than the other. What we must consider is whether the act of making one branch into two is necessarily progress, that is, making for the more efficient functioning of the Party. And, as a corollary, are we not justified, in some cases, in advocating the amalgamation of two or more branches?**

Taking a purely short-term view, it appears that members are more active in newly-formed branches. They get a kick out of building up the branch, but—most of the work is official. There has to be a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Literature Secretary, an Organiser. The filling of these posts practically exhausts the active membership of many branches, and leaves precious few to take part in propaganda activity.

One obvious advantage in having larger

branches is the reduction of official work, since correspondence, reports, circulars, etc., are no more for a branch of 60 members than for one of 30. Money is saved on the rent of branch rooms.

Another advantage is in the better attendances at branch meetings. A more representative selection of views may be heard at larger meetings; a greater sense of responsibility is felt, and it is less possible for branches to be "carried" by a determined individual or a minority. A much higher standard of discussion is obtained and more members are encouraged to attend when meetings are lively, than when they are merely minute-reading circles.

Tasks that a branch of 60 might undertake and make a success are beyond the capabilities of one of 30. In some cases, of several branches fairly close to each other, not one is now capable of running successful outdoor meetings—but one large branch would probably be able to do so. It is no solution to suggest that two or more branches should come together for certain purposes. A meeting or campaign must always be organised from one centre, and the helping branches will inevitably find that propaganda, like charity, begins at home.

Lastly, the question of getting non-members to attend branch meetings. The invitation is an open one, but few accept it, and few members feel happy about bringing along friends. When they do, they are careful to pick "discussion nights", when routine business and the atmosphere of the inner circle are at a minimum. What obstructs the further growth of the Party organisation may be summed up, not as the smallness of branches, but as the existence of small-branch ideas.

LEO.

## INCREASE IN DUES

*(We have received the following statement from S.W. London Branch with a request for publication, and we understand from The General Secretary that there is no objection.—Editors)*

A PARTY poll is shortly to be taken on the question "should members dues be increased from 3d. to 6d. per week?"

We, in the S.W. London Branch, consider that the following facts should be considered by members before reaching their decision:—

When the Party was formed in 1904, members were expected to pay dues of 2d per week, the average wage of the working class at that time being from 20/- to 25/- per week; the contributions were fixed at 3d. per week during the 1920's when the average wage was between 50/- to 60/- per week. It can be clearly seen, therefore, that members in previous years paid a far higher proportion of

their income to the Party in the form of dues than they do now.

The cost of running the Party, premises, printing, indoor-meetings, stationery, postage, etc., has increased many times over.

Further, it is considered that raising dues would spread the Party's financial burden more evenly over the membership; also, the E.C. would be able to know in advance that they could depend on a certain sum annually (i.e., 1,000 members at 6d. per week is £1,300 per year) and budget accordingly instead of having to estimate as to how much extra may be received from donations.

In the case of members not able to afford the dues, they would still be able to have them waived as obtains at present, but we consider that the majority of members will be able to pay 6d. per week without hardship.

S.W. LONDON BRANCH.



# FORUM

*Internal Journal  
of the S.P.G.B.*

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.**

## EDITORIAL

WITH the publication of the third issue of FORUM, we confess to feelings akin to a hurdle runner, who, while having successfully cleared the third hurdle, has not quite recovered his surprise at having cleared the first, and is a little less apprehensive about those still in front of him. The chances are that we shall quickly cease to think of hurdles at all. As the purpose and scope of FORUM becomes more apparent, there is no doubt that the demand on space will become heavy. To date, we have published views on several subjects. There are many questions in the Party about which there are decided and strong divergent views, and which under scrutiny in these pages could not fail to gain considerably in clarity. The writer in FORUM may represent himself, a branch, a committee, the E.C., or a companion organisation; the subject matter may include any aspect of theory, administration, policy and principles. Now that FORUM is going ahead, we hope that it will be taken for granted by all that there is no matter which is excluded from its pages.

**January FORUM will include...**

**A reply to the critics of the article on 'censorship' which appeared in the July S.S.**

**A reply to the criticism of the article 'The Nature of The Socialist Revolution.'**

**A criticism of the articles on The Ballot and Socialism'.**

## MORE ON PREMISES AND FINANCE

The articles in October FORUM by Frank Offord and A. P. about premises and Party finances, make depressing reading. On the one hand, Offord implies that because of the expense of running No. 52, we must scheme to increase our income by social activity, cut speakers' expenses, and increase the price of S.S. On the other hand, A.P. makes the rejoinder that we should seek more modest premises and not engage in activities to raise money for premises we cannot afford. In both cases, there is an underlying assumption that the present financial difficulties are due to the expense of running Head Office. It is possible that both are wrong. It is possible that both are unnecessarily pessimistic.

When the Party raised funds to purchase premises, the amount of money raised by donations fell short of the purchase by £1,500. This deficiency was met by a loan from a member and by using £500 from the Party's General Fund. The Autumn Delegate Meeting report showed that £400 of the £1,000 loan had been repaid. It is the case, therefore, that had the Party been able to raise the whole of the money by donations it would now have in its General Fund (unless spent on other activities) the £500 absorbed in buying premises plus the £400 it has found to repay part of the loan. The fact that the Party has little balance in its funds is not necessarily due to the Party's income falling (though this could be true for other reasons) or because income has been sucked up by expenses on premises, but because the Party has *invested* its funds. If this is the case, it is not so depressing. The ability in the first year to repay a substantial part of the £1,000 loan indicates a healthy financial situation and could mean that within little more than a year the whole of the loan might be paid off and the income become available for other Party activities. Having in mind the bad state of repair of No. 52 when we first took over, it is obvious that in the first year at the new premises considerable money must have been spent on decorations and structural alterations. If the money for this was found from income, there seems little cause for pessimism about the "financial state of the Party". This sort of expenditure is likely to be heavy in the first year anyway.

Is No. 52 more than the Party can afford? If we could find something cheaper, would it give us the facilities that we need?

It is said that our premises cost £10 weekly to run, and it might well be the case. The rather vague statement which was before the Autumn Delegate Meeting certainly indicated a cost something like this. Though, of course, against this, an income from social and other activities must be taken into account in any assessment of the cost of the premises. Is the cost high or, like so many other things these days, is it that it merely seems to be high? On reflection, it seems that the latter is the case. If the Party had its pre-war premises today at a rent which allowed for the post-war

increase in prices, there seems little doubt that the cost of running them would be as much, if not more than our present premises, and our pre-war accommodation was much less adequate than what we have to-day. Also, had we remained at Rugby Chambers on the revised terms dictated by the landlords, it is reasonably certain that the comparable costs there would have been no less than they are in our present circumstances. If we cannot afford our present premises, then obviously we cannot afford the modest sort of accommodation we had before the war and before we went to Clapham. It would take a lot to convince the Party that this is the case, in view of the larger membership (and full employment). Before A.P.'s suggestion that we should rent a basement as an office is acted upon, Party members would have a full and clear statement of the finances of the Party. The position at the moment is obscure, and whilst this is so, Party members cannot be blamed for the opinion (sincerely held by some) that donations to the Party which are given for Party work are sucked up by the expenses on premises we cannot afford. If opinions like this exist, then it must adversely affect contributions to funds, and something should be done to correct them if they are false. If they are not false, then the Party should know where it stands so that appropriate action be taken.

What seems certain is that the overwhelming majority of the membership like and want the sort of facilities offered by the present (or similar) premises and would make efforts to retain them. When a clear statement of the financial position is before the Party it may reveal that our present difficulties are due to more than one cause. It may be that there is a combination of causes, perhaps S.W. London is right in its case that whilst costs to the Party have increased, Party members get their membership on the cheap in relation to present-day prices.

Is it possible for those responsible to produce a detailed report for the next Conference in a form which does not assume that we are all professional accountants? Better still, perhaps a statement could appear in FORUM before the next Conference.

N.E.

**IF YOU WANT  
FORUM TO BE A  
GREATER SUCCESS  
—INTRODUCE AND  
RECOMMEND IT TO  
OTHER MEMBERS.**



# THE NATURE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

## 2 Historical Materialism

(Continued)

### Progressive Man

THE core of Socialist theory is a unified concept of history, society and man, centred round the recognition that the spring of history is the peculiar dynamic character of human production, which begets needs in the course of satisfying needs—of the social labour which is not simply reproductive but cumulative, not simply self-perpetuating but self-changing. When men learn to produce corn they also produce the need for store-houses and vessels, the need also for sentinels against rodents and robbers, for wise men to tell the time of sowing and reaping, for tithe and tribute, for exchange and property and class, all held together with the thongs of mind called habit, necessity, right and wrong, and all—seed or sentinel or sentiment—active elements in the organisation of the labour process. Historical materialism is the recognition that history is the evolution, and society the organisation of human labour, and that mind and society are not separate things related, but inner and outer sides of the same reality: social labour.

### A False Separation

Because a philosophy of history is the core of Socialist theory, differences between us are rooted in different interpretations of historical materialism, and these differences are actually invited by our having taken over, ready-made, an inadequate statement of it from Marx and Engels. I refer to the Manifesto ("In every historical epoch the mode of economic production and exchange form the base . . .") and to Engels' letters explaining what they meant (by adding that ideas react upon the base), and I am here criticising the form of expression, while recognising the historical and practical factors which conditioned that form. Historical materialism is fully expressed by Marx, but nowhere is it fully expressed in a single comprehensive statement, and nowhere does he explicitly define "mode of production". As a political party, popularising Socialist theory, we have naturally taken the Manifesto statement; and the analogies of base, superstructure and reflections, of action and reaction, have become second nature by familiarity, with the result that the metaphorical tends to become literal truth, and any amplification suspected of "revisionism".

What we still have to bear in mind is that Marx did not demolish the dualism of Hegel by inverting it, he only perpetuated it right side up. And it is dualism, the false separation (of ideas and action, mind and matter, etc.) which underwrites idealism. The fallacy of idealism is not its order of precedence, but its false separation of things distinguished. The answer to the "supremacy of mind over matter" is not its inversion to the supremacy of matter over mind, which merely perpetuates the separation, but the mental reintegration of the things mentally separated, the recognition that the separation is merely classificatory, arbitrary.

Of necessity we distinguish between men and society, production and administration, institutions and outlook, thought and action, subject and object—metal (verbal) separations valid for their purposes, but all finally deceiving unless finally integrated in the single phenomenon of human social labour. Within its limits it is commonsense enough to say that man's being determines his consciousness and then to add that consciousness reacts on being, but because, in form, this still implies the separation, upright or inverted, it still permits idealism to creep back with its "Ah, but it is this reaction which constitutes the dynamic, it is ideas, purposes, which make the activity what it is". And there you have the irresolvable shuttlecock argument: "Yes, but the ideas are determined by the activities which give rise to them"—"Ah, but those activities were themselves purposive"—"Yes, but those purposes were activity-created". This is indeed the true dialectic!

Thinking accompanies the effort, is part of the effort, to achieve the purpose, the need, already given by a given situation, and the achievement of the aim (or the failure—in any case the activity) creates a new situation, that is, new needs, new activity, new needs . . . But this much man shares with animals: it does not account for history. The cycle of need, activity, changed need, changed activity is common to the world of living things. Nor does purposiveness, consciousness, begin with man—it is shared by other animals in varying degrees. The history-creating character of the human mode of existence lies in the fact that men create and accumulate means of production. With other animals, the cycle of need, activity, changed need, changed activity, is circular; the circles may be big or small, but in the end—repetitive. With man the process is not circular but progressive, for the continuous accumulation of means continuously

creates unprecedented situations, containing unprecedented needs and purposes.

### Organic Unity

"Ah, but it is the peculiarly sharp focus of human consciousness, the special conceptual quality of human thinking, which makes possible the creation of means. Capacity to think is still the history-creating dynamic". Good enough. But don't let us confuse capacity to think with ideas! Ideas are not created by capacity to think, they are compelled by needs commanded by situations created by activities determined by situations. It is because men's mode of existence creates means of production that production produces history, and that men's conduct and men's ideas are the product of their products.

The analogy we take over from Marx, which, in inverting Hegel, still opposes base and superstructure (production and institutions), does not err in the mere fact of distinguishing between them, but it conspires at error. For in distinguishing between things intimately connected (labour activity and social relations) we are led into describing the intimacy of the connection as a *causal relationship*, thus converting distinction into separation and obscuring the *organic unity* of production, institutions and outlook.

### Continuity of History

Under Capitalism, a tractor crawling over a field is obviously different from a religious tract or the law of contract. Yet the wheels of capitalist machinery could not turn without the sanctions and certainties provided by the law, nor without the prevailing sentiments of men, the general and predictable patterns of men's minds which, because they organise behaviour into regular and self-regulating forms, ensure the continuity of the productive processes, and are thus themselves a productive force.

Under Feudalism, the institutions of Church and State are distinguishable both from the productive operations of peasants and gildsmen and from the ideals carried in their heads. Yet

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Pope and peasant are only terminal points in a series of social productive relationships between serf and baron, revolving round fief and tribute, and requiring for their daily perpetuation a continuum of sentiments—chivalry, submissiveness, ordained status.

In primitive communities, labour is permeated by ritual, and ritual is embodied belief. Their religion is magic, and magic is the art and science of production. With a digging stick, a dozen tribesmen stand in a circle, a dozen circles in a row; they raise their sticks, plunge, turn the soil between them, prance forward, raise, plunge; they sing and whoop, with chant and tom-tom to guide the economical rhythm of their actions, they lift up their knees as they prance, to make the crops grow tall. What is this song and dance but art, science, magic, religion—and production?

Countless ages pass by before the productive operations, the social institutions and the sentiments of men appear to have separate locus and separable existence, yet however far the differentiation is carried in the course of history they retain their *organic integrity*—in social labour—as the spokes of a wheel, however long, are only extensions of the hub. The unity of history is contained in the fact that its substance is labour. The continuity of history is contained in the fact that the mode of production contains within itself the necessity of its own development, by accumulation of means.

#### Labour Produces Needs

When Marx says ("*German Ideology*") that "the first historical act is the production of the *means* to satisfy human needs" (my italics) and that "this historical act is the fundamental condition of all history", he clearly does not mean by "first" any such nonsense as that production precedes social organisation or that men must eat before they can think. "First" here is not a chronological category, but is

used to announce the essential and paramount quality of history—labour. For he goes on to show that labour produces not merely products, but new needs. "And it is this production of new needs which is the first historical act".

It is because human labour processively generates new means that it progressively modifies the labour process, produces new needs, new purposes, new habits, new men. History runs because human labour is continually trying to catch up with its own feet. Human labour creates history because the wheel of production is eccentric, its centre of gravity continuously shifting between the "factors" distinguished by Marx (as a necessity of analysis)—continuously shifting from "means" to "process", from "relations between men and nature" (biological) to "relations between men" (social), from "means provided by nature" (geographical) to "instruments produced by men" (technical). The biological "factor" dominates primordial labour; geography dominates savage labour; the social relations of kinship and custom dominate barbarian labour, and occupational status dominates feudal labour ("Undermining", as Engels says, in *The Family*, "the communism of production and consumption"); the instruments of production dominate capitalist labour.

#### Evolution and Production

This concept of history is a product of capitalist production; in the flesh and blood we salute Marx and Engels. The salute is a little formal if we put Marx before Marxism. Marx was compelled more than once to do less than justice to himself, and Engels did less than justice to both of them when he tried to rescue Marxism from the awkward analogy of "base and superstructure" by means of "action and reaction" in which "cause and effect perpetually change place".

The deficiencies of form were historically conditioned, by the need to grapple with Feudal idealism and by the mechanical idiom of water-clocks and puffing-billies. In an age of biology our only plea for perpetuating them is laziness. Analogies must be recognised for what they are: devices for explaining the less concrete or familiar in terms of the more concrete or familiar: stepping stones, not shrines—and language for what it is: a good servant and a bad master. Whether we use buildings or biology to explain it, it remains that society is organisation of men's labour. It remains that the "parts" and "factors", means and process and institutions and sentiments, are active and operative elements in the associated labour which is men's mode of existence. It remains that nowhere does Marx explicitly define "mode of production" because with him it is implicitly *society itself*.

**Society "begins" in proportion as men organise their labour force, and emerges imperceptibly from the primordial condition of mere association, consanguine and instinctive. History "begins" with the act of production, because human production produces means. Society evolves, has momentum, because accretion of means shifts the centre of gravity. In our time, capital is the centre of gravity, the growing point of history, supercharged with the dynamic of accumulation. And the Labour Theory of Value is only a special case of the Labour Theory of History, for with Marx surplus value is not simply the tally of exploitation but the spring of capital's continual transformations (from "quantity into quality") by which it is compelled to generate the socialist mode of production. (To be continued.)**

F. EVANS.

## YOU CAN'T BUY SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA

IT is well known that the capitalist class buy propaganda. They pay journalists to write, they own the means of distribution, and pay speakers and lecturers. The hiring of a hall for a meeting and large-scale advertising are also easily done by a political party with good financial resources.

No Socialist Party can hope to be in this position; a larger membership would not necessarily ease matters, as there would be more meetings required to cover the wider area of an increased number of branches.

Some members tend to judge our activity by the amount of money the Party spends each year. They assume that the more the Party spends on propaganda the more actual propaganda is done. This is not necessarily the case.

When the Party is in financial difficulties, as at the present time, if anyone suggests cuts in expenditure, many members immediately assume that we will have to make cuts in our propaganda. To avoid this, there is a constant begging by the Treasurer and the E.C. for more funds.

**It is time the Party recognised the fact that you can't buy socialist propaganda. What is needed is more work put in by the membership. Donating money is all very well, but it can easily be spent on all kinds of schemes which, but for members' lack of activity, would not be required.**

There are good forms of socialist propaganda which do not cost a penny—but they do require work, and it is the desire to work for Socialism that is lacking in the Party. It is well known that the membership of the S.P.G.B. is to a considerable extent a paper membership. How to end this and how to put an end to the idea that more money will increase our propaganda is something the Party should consider.

**THE SALE OF THE S.S.** is a useful form of socialist propaganda. The sales of the official journal of the Party are deplorable. I doubt whether any political organisation in this country has such a low circulation of its official journal relative to its membership.

Why not try a method to increase sales used

by some other organisations?

- (1) Each branch should be set a target to aim at in its monthly sales of the S.S.
- (2) Monthly sales by each branch should be published in FORUM.
- (3) Branches who greatly exceed their target should receive special praise, and the branch with the lowest sales in relation to its membership should be named.

I feel certain that this would increase the sales of the S.S. No branch would wish to be in the unenviable position of being bottom of the table. A competition between branches would result and more members be brought into activity.

Comrades, get rid of this idea that you can buy socialist propaganda—you have to work for it. Let us try cheaper methods of propaganda and put an end to these begging letters for money.

D. W. LOCK  
(Lewisham Branch)



# WHAT CAUSES SOCIETY TO DEVELOP?

*An abridged report of the discussion at the Head Office Forum on November 8th*

*Panel: W. Read, J. Trotman, A. Turner, E. Wilmott*

**Turner:** Why wasn't Socialism possible 500 years ago? Some argue that it was because there were not the means of production present to make it possible.

I am concerned with Marx's statement: "a social system never perishes before all the productive forces have developed for which it is wide enough." What was in Marx's mind is not so clear in others—there has come to be a separation between the mode of production and ideas. These are one and the same; ideas are made objective in the means of production. Machines in themselves contain no spur to further development.

The concrete expression of what makes man develop is that he is a tool-making animal—he has to think first. Organic evolution reached its peak with the development of the human brain and conceptual thinking. The dynamic is not in the tools of production, but in rational thinking, that is, being faithful to a correct idea. There are two ways of breaking down barriers to this: contact with ideas, and machines. The object is to bring man into harmony with his environment. The phrase 'means of production are the key to development' implies a mechanical attitude.

**Trotman:** According to Turner, then, men's ideas are the social prime mover.

**Read:** But other animals besides man are capable of using tools. If so, we can imagine some form of organisation and use of implements for accomplishment of ends. Turner infers a rational faculty in man which other animals don't have.

In fact, man often made mistakes—he found the end in view never came out the way he thought. The act, experience, is part of thought, as shown by the ability to memorise past events. The fact is that different group organisations have different ideologies and thought processes. The general ideas of primitive communism would have been incongruous in any other form of society.

How does transition take place? The socialist argues that the techniques of production develop until the social relations can no longer contain them. Then the idea of change arises—and some section of society acts to change the social relations.

The basis of Marxism is that in different epochs different laws are at work. The laws of Capitalism are the accumulation of capital in fewer hands, competition, and individual property.

## Economic Basis

**Turner:** When does the technique of Capitalism develop to the point when Socialism is possible?

**Read:** So long as there is the possibility of further accumulation of capital and demand for labour, then Socialism is not a practical possibility. It only becomes so when the accumulation of capital cannot be satisfied by any further development of Capitalism—when

crises become perpetual and concentration on means of destruction becomes general.

**Wilmott:** What is meant by the material conditions of history? We are seeking a universal key and Turner's simplified statement is not satisfactory. Does he accept the *economic basis* of society and what does he mean by it?

**Turner:** It is the relation that people stand to other people about the means of production.

**Wilmott:** I don't agree. That tells us nothing about the means of production. Do you include ideas in the economic basis, and do you distinguish between the two?

**Turner:** The economic basis is more than just the mode of production—it includes the productive relations.

**Wilmott:** The economic basis, then, is that which something else rests upon. I say this basis does *not* equal the productive relations.

**Turner:** Read says it is the techniques of production and certain adverse conditions. But what makes these techniques develop?

**Read:** Certain sections of society find themselves in adverse conditions, which they try to improve, whilst others try to reverse the course of history. Since different epochs have different laws, the answer depends on the sort of society.

**Wilmott:** Does Turner consider that the techniques of production are part of the social factors at work?

**Turner:** Yes. When you speak of the techniques, you postulate the existence of human society. Between techniques and ideas there is an obvious mental difference. Technique is the outcome of ideas, and ideas come out of conditions. In the process of classification you separate them, but unfortunately some see ideas as the reflection of the mode of production. But a reflection never changes. The *techniques* of production have never stopped changing, though the *mode* has remained the same.

## Rationality

**Wilmott:** What does Turner mean by rationality? Surely, conditions largely determine the nature of ideas. Marx rejected the theory of pure interaction—he was out to find the underlying principle. Can Turner explain why the rationality of one age becomes the irrationality of another?

Society is not dependent on rationality as its driving force. Why do men act concretely? We are not concerned with some shadowy cause and effect. The wide term 'rationality' does not help us. To say (as Turner does) that all thinking is rational, presupposes irrationality.

The techniques of production played a powerful part in the 19th century until the conditions of the working class were insufficient basis for large-scale production. The techniques played a temporary part, but they changed the character of ideas.

**Turner:** Why is Wilmott concerned with saying that techniques determine ideas? Also, from what Read said earlier, I imagine he had collapse of Capitalism in mind. Your

ideas of Socialism are cataclysmic.

**Read:** All the thinking of Aristotle could never have arrived at the idea of Value. What, then, was the bar to his rationality? It was because free labour didn't exist, therefore the idea of Value couldn't have arisen. If rationality is consequential, it would seem that all man's activities could be thought out beforehand.

You can't leave out of account the use of certain tools dependent on the form of society and which must have the sanction of custom. The tools are only modified when there are adverse conditions (which may be social, or some calamity like war). Then there is the necessity of reorganising. People don't think out the ideas that prevail—it is not a question of rationality.

**Turner:** So it is custom that holds ideas static? But there is a struggle between the ideas of custom and those that eschew custom. Both have come out of the conditions of both sections who hold them. One set sees a new re-shaping of ideas that the others haven't seen. It is ideas that precede action.

**Wilmott:** The motive power behind ideas is men's needs and material interests. Ideas don't come from the blue. What makes certain ideas accepted, and what are the other components of ideas?

## What is the Dynamic?

**Turner:** The motive power can't be in men's needs, because this motive is true of all organisms. But only man has made an artificial world. If you want to trace the dynamic of man's evolution, you must remember that man hasn't anatomically changed. There is a real world, there are real factors—but ideas brought in relations, conditions, and acts.

Men think rationally or logically from the knowledge they possess. It is a mistake to think that because people may come to wrong conclusions they are irrational or illogical. The correct ideas are those that have changed the world—the others bring people at variance with it. The only object of thinking is to place man in correspondence with conditions.

Socialism wasn't possible 500 years ago because man could never have had the idea of universality. The whole development of ideas came out of conditions—but there are still inadequate actions. The development of man in society is approaching universality.

**Wilmott:** The problem is not an intellectual one. It is: how are men going to live? That is the dynamic. Material conditions stamp ideas and give them their character. You cannot explain ideas in terms of other ideas.

**Trotman:** The materialist doesn't discount ideas, though to put them first is an oversimplification. Turner says the means of production are concretised ideas, but it is not merely that. All sorts of things are concretised



in them. He says the dynamic is the ability of man to form concepts. But, equally, if man had no head or no hands, society would never have developed. Why pick out the ability to form concepts? The ability of society to expand and develop depends on all biological factors, not on any one. It is not true that thinking is immediately prior to acting. To say so doesn't tell us anything. *Why do we think?*

The ability to form concepts doesn't explain this—it is a constant. You must explain social development in some other way. Society is, in fact, an organisation for production.

The idea of universality is only half the picture. With the shrinking of the world, it makes Socialism a practical possibility. But remember that the idea of a round world wasn't accepted until there was the need for a new trade route.

*Turner:* True, but there could not have been the need until some people had the idea. It was the idea of a round world that gave rise

to the need.

*Read:* But there was knowledge of a round world in the Ptolemaic system and by the ancient Greeks. The reason people went round the world was that there developed in Europe the need for spices, etc., only obtainable from the East. Only then was the necessary action taken—when the need had already developed.

*Turner:* It wasn't just the idea of a round world that led to development, but the concretising of other ideas coming out of conditions. If ideas and action are not in conformity they bring about a contradiction; it is not a question of ideas in themselves.

To Trotman—man has always had hands, but he hasn't always had the same society. As ideas came in, he changed his world; as he develops, he throws over prejudices. But still there is a margin or error, still his ideas are not in conformity with the real world.

*Wilmott:* Why are these ideas not in conformity with the real world?

*Turner:* Because the actions based upon them come into conflict with the real world.

*Wilmott:* So the real world is distinct from ideas—what, then, is it?

*Turner:* It is the totality of the world including man. Advancement has been where ideas were in line with the real world. One barrier was that some people thought others were biologically inferior.

*Wilmott:* In slave America it was thought that the Negro was inferior—that was the 'real world'. How did rationality affect that?

**Turner: Nobody says the world is rational. People are rational. The world exists whether people think rightly or wrongly about it. The reason for Socialism not being possible earlier wasn't that the means of production weren't in plenty—it was that people's ideas were not in conformity with it.**

The meeting then continued on the basis of questions and general discussion.

Written questions on this subject to any member of the panel should be addressed to FORUM, and the member concerned will reply. Other comments or criticisms will be considered for publication.—*Editors.*

## NEWSPPOINTS

### Prices 1% Ahead of Wages

Retail food prices went up 6 per cent. between January and September, non-food retail prices remained stationary, but wholesale prices for basic (non-food) materials went down 15 per cent. Taken all together, retail prices went up 3 per cent. between January and August and wage rates went up 2 per cent.

Between September last year and September this year unemployment in the metal, engineering, and vehicles trades increased from 29,000 to 52,000; in textiles and clothing from 17,000 to 76,000, having stood at 158,000 in June; in other manufactures from 26,000 to 49,000, the June figure having been 54,000; and in all other industries and services from 145,000 to 213,000.

*Times*, 31/10/52.

### But This Profit 100% Up

Sir John Reeves Ellerman the Second is Britain's richest man. He is also the shyest of millionaires. Equally shy is the £36,000,000 Ellerman Lines from which all Sir John's riches stem. For Ellermans do not send its annual report generally to the Press.

Yet it is a fabulous document, showing profits last year more than doubled at £5,113,000, a jump of £2,605,000. The cream of the Korea boom for the line's 90 ships.

*Daily Express*, 11/11/52.

### Too Much

Huge surpluses of wheat, cattle, fruit, and dairy products have faced the Canadian Government with a rare problem in the post-war world—the problem of too much food.

Unexpectedly heavy harvests and increased cattle, milk, and cheese production has left Canada with surplus food for which, at present, there are no buyers. So extensive is the over-production that nearly every agricultural area in Canada is affected.

In the past, such surpluses have been reduced either by sending food abroad as a free gift with the Canadian Government footing the bill, or by extensive foreign credits to enable would-be customers to buy Canadian food products.

The Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, said recently, however, that he does not intend to resort to either of these methods to meet the present crisis.

*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 2/10/52.

### And Too Long

Britain's 35,000 cobblers are worried by a new rubberised plastic sole material, shown yesterday at the Earls Court Shoe and Leather Fair.

The new plastic, highly popular in the U.S., is likely to have a serious effect on the leather market for shoes. It is said to last twice as long as leather, but manufacturers have found it sometimes lasts ten times as long.

*Daily Mail*, 18/11/52.

### American Visa Policy

Professor Einstein writes, in part: "The free, unhampered exchange of ideas and scientific conclusions is necessary for the sound development of science, as it is in all spheres of cultural life. In my opinion there can be no doubt that the intervention of the political authorities in this country in the free exchange of knowledge between individuals has already had a significantly damaging effect. Interference with the freedom of the oral and written communication of scientific results, the widespread attitude of political distrust which is supported by an immense police organization, the timidity and anxiety of individuals to avoid everything which might cause suspicion and could threaten their economic positions—all these are symptoms, even though they reveal more clearly the threatening character of the illness."

### Japanese "Safety Force"

Japanese progress towards rearmament took another step forward when the 110,000 strong National Police Reserve became the "National Safety Force" under a recently enacted law and Mr. Yoshida, the Prime Minister, took the salute at a public parade of 3,500 troops who later marched through the streets of Tokyo.

The National Safety Force, which wears American-style uniforms and is trained by an American military mission, has more than 650 officers of field rank who were formerly officers in the Imperial Japanese Army, and many of its men—all volunteers—were formerly conscripts in the Japanese Army. The force has all infantry weapons, as well as field artillery and light tanks. The latter have been lent indefinitely by the American Army.

Mr. Yoshida, addressing the parade, said that the National Safety Force was not an army, but a force with the power to maintain peace and order in Japan. It would be used under public control

to repel outside attack and to suppress civil strife. *Times*, 16/10/52.

### Output Cuts Urged

"To prevent a further drop in prices," the Federation of Cotton and Staple Fibre Dealers Association declares, "the Ministry of Trade should reduce the present output limit of 165,000 bales of cotton yarn a month to 145,000 bales in November and December."

*Financial Times*, 21/10/52.

### Theory and Practice

"It is our great good fortune that our Party, our people, who are building communism, are being continuously enriched and equipped with the masterly theoretical works of great Stalin (*tumultuous and prolonged applause*).

"In *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*, Comrade Stalin has raised and solved the fundamental questions of the character of economic laws under socialism, of commodity production under socialism, of the law of value under socialism, of the measures for elevating collective farm property to the level of public property, of the basic economic laws of modern capitalism and socialism, of the three basic preliminary conditions for the transition from socialism to communism, of the elimination of the essential distinctions between town and country, between mental labour and physical labour, of the disintegration of the single world market and the deepening of the crisis of the world capitalist system, of the inevitability of wars between capitalist countries."

*L. M. Kaganovich,*

*at the Communist Party Congress, 13/10/52.*

*Soviet News*, 15/11/52.

But starry-eyed comrades who think that Russia has abolished class distinctions had better not book on the passenger-cargo liner Tobolsk. She carries eighty passengers in the FIRST CLASS and 266 in the THIRD CLASS.

The same class distinction operates among the Tobolsk's crew. Like the first-class passengers the officers usually have two-berth cabins with private showers. All furnishings are in decorative hardwoods.

Third-class comrades and the crew are less comfortable. They have metal berths, and some third-class passengers travel twelve to a cabin.

*Daily Mirror*, 22/11/52.