

FORUM

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SIXPENCE

SHOULD WE BE SELECTIVE?

Which Workers support the Party:

FROM one point of view the plea for selective propaganda requires little more than the extension into organised propaganda work of a principle which guides our individual efforts to persuade others to our way of thinking.

In our day-to-day personal propaganda for Socialism, we are all selective. We know from experience that, although few of any are completely and utterly "hopeless" prospects, some people have much more in common with our views, are "more sympathetic", "better prospects", or "nearer our position" than others. This is to be expected. Even assuming complete biological equality at birth among human beings (a not altogether unwise assumption for the sociologist) the differing environmental backgrounds make for differences of viewpoint among people, which render some more receptive to socialist propaganda than others.

In this way we explain why only the odd one or two at present respond favourably to our propaganda and ultimately join the Party, while the majority we meet react in a different fashion. When we further consider that people become socialists from many and varied walks of life, we are led to the conclusion that receptivity to socialist propaganda is an attitude or outlook upon life, not necessarily of an occupational character.

From this standpoint, those affinities of outlook with which we are concerned lie not in mere agreement about empirically observable fact, but rather in a similarity of more fundamental or basic ideas in terms of which the day-to-day empirical facts are interpreted and understood. Briefly then, those people whose basic ideas conform more and more closely to our own, whose pattern of generalisations into which the detailed facts of everyday life are assimilated, will be those to whom, other things equal, our propaganda could be more fruitfully directed.

Basic Question of Philosophy

THE concept of basic or fundamental ideas is not a new one. In our own case we recognise certain of our ideas as derived from more fundamental notions. The D. of P. itself we recognise as a number of generalisations derived from the application of a more general principle (the M.C.H.) to a particular phase of historical development. The M.C.H. in turn we know has derived from the application to the sphere of society of an even more abstract body of generalisations—materialism in general, or

the materialist philosophy.

From the foregoing, it follows that similarity of outlook is greatest where the most fundamental (i.e. philosophical) views are most alike. Obversely, outlooks differ most where differences reach down to basic ideas (again philosophical ones). Materialism and idealism present two opposing answers to the basic question of all philosophy—the relation of mind to matter, thought to being, or consciousness to existence (see Engels). The answers materialism gives to this question lead us to the idea of man as a creature of circumstances largely determined by environment, and to the negation of the idea of free will. Idealism, on the other hand, is associated with free will, the "triumph of mind over matter", concepts of soul and spirit, and vitalistic assumptions generally.

Little wonder that a political materialist and a political idealist, setting out to discuss a social problem, e.g. crime and punishment, become involved in an argument which leaves deep differences of opinion almost invariably unresolved. The former sees the criminal as a product of society, whereas the latter sees the problems of crime and punishment as products of human nature.

When the argument ranges over even wider issues (e.g. would socialism work?) we see the conflict of opinion at its greatest. The following are some of the most popular questions discussed.

1. Would people work without compulsion?
2. Who would do the "dirty" work?
3. What about the criminal?
4. Isn't war human nature?
5. Surely there must be leaders?

All these questions imply this basic problem of philosophy, the relation of man to his environment. This is made clear when we reply to questioners by pointing out that in one way or another they are projecting into the future, as immutable features of human nature, characteristics which we see as derived from and appropriate to certain specific material conditions of society. These questions are not unconnected posers. They arise from a more or less idealistic interpretation of specific social problems. In fact, the more idealistic the interpretation the less "social" and more individual and personal do the problems become. This is seen in that kind of solution that says "recovery begins within," because for that person the problem begins within.

Our Left-Wing Origin

WE now come to the first major proposition with regard to propaganda. Those people to whom propaganda efforts can be more fruitfully directed are those whose basic views are materialist or near materialist.

In the political field, the materialist and idealist attitudes to social problems find their expression in left wing and right wing groups respectively. The more "left" the political movement, the more its theoretical case conflicts with the assumptions of idealism—free will, spirit, soul, God. In the most developed form of left-wing thought—i.e. ourselves, the S.P.G.B.—the conflict is explicit and admits of no compromise. In less developed left-wing thought, the recognition of these conflicting assumptions is less clear. People who believe in God can and do join those organisations and work within them, although very often their conception of God, as actively participating in man's social life, is diluted and modified to a "God help them as helps themselves" attitude. Be that as it may, however, the general proposition holds that in extreme left-wing politics philosophical thought is uncompromisingly materialist.

I have used the term "left-wing" in connection with the Party, although I realise we do not consider ourselves, and are not in fact, "left-wing" politicians in the "practical politics" and reformist sense of the term. Nevertheless, the name "left-wing" has obvious connections with ourselves the moment we consider the political group from which we emerged. We were born of "left-wing" circles. This fact alone is of enormous significance as a historical and evolutionary justification of the views put forward in this article.

Would anyone seriously contend that our Party could have emerged from Conservative or even near-right wing political circles? Yet a similar assumption is made about supporters of "right-wing" political organisations to-day, i.e. that we are as likely to obtain the understanding support of those who support "right-wing" politics as those who who understand and support "left-wing" groups.

In the above passages I have used terms of which space precludes definition. Very often, however, the meaning of a phrase becomes apparent on scrutiny of its context. Should this not be the case, I will be happy to enter into fuller detail in a future contribution.

J. MCGREGOR.

ELECTORAL ACTIVITY IN N. PADDINGTON

AT the time of writing, it is likely that W. Field, M.P., will resign. The resulting by-election in North Paddington would provide the opportunity for the Party to implement its Conference decision to contest suitable by-elections whenever possible.

On February 24th, Paddington Branch asked the E.C. to arrange to contest this by-election. The E.C. motion to do so was lost 4-7, on the grounds that the Party was thought to be unable to collect the necessary money without jeopardising other projects such as the new edition of *Questions of the Day*. The "consideration" that was given to the proposal to contest North Paddington was the decision to make no move to try. No enthusiasm was shown by the majority of E.C. members, no expression (however pious) of regret in turning it down—just capitulation, without a struggle to raise a penny for this purpose from the Party that says it wants to contest elections, and particularly by-elections.

We must now reiterate the case for contesting elections, or, rather, for at least *trying* to contest elections. The advantages of running a concentrated propaganda drive at a by-election are obvious. During the campaign, attention is focussed on the constituency and on the party politics put forward by the candidates. The publicity value is on a national scale and creates an interest and an effect that cannot be achieved by other means.

At present, it is true, the Party is desperately short of money. We urgently need funds to carry on the day-to-day work of the Party, aside from the expense of running an electoral

campaign (minimum £400). But we are confident that if members and sympathisers know the facts—if they understand the necessity of not letting our propaganda suffer through lack of money—then they will rally round as they have in the past.

If there is a by-election in the offing, then there is no time to lose. A campaign, to be effective, must be planned well beforehand, and machinery set in motion that will slip into top gear as soon as dates are definitely known. The determination to contest elections whenever possible will itself act as a spur to members and sympathisers, who will cease to regard the S.P.G.B. — a political party — as a mere debating society.

We in Paddington Branch do not believe that lack of money is the only reason for not contesting elections. It is only part of the vicious circle of reduced activity leading to reduced income which, in turn, is the excuse for still further reducing activity. The Party must turn this downward spiral into an upward one. More literature and more meetings require more opportunities for selling literature and for

gathering audiences, and an election campaign is one way of providing such opportunities.

We urged the E.C. to prepare for electoral activity because we believe that the Party can get the money to do whatever the membership is determined to do. It should not be a question of priorities. The decision to contest the next General Election, for example, can be made meaningless by adding "if we can afford it". The decision, to be meaningful, must assume the same sort of determination that was shown to purchase Head Office premises.

One final word to the doubters. Electoral activity does not rob us of literature, meetings and other propaganda—it gives them a fillip. With enthusiasm, we jump into the propaganda campaign and make it a success: with doubts, we stand on the edge until we convince ourselves that we can't do it. Unfortunately, those who oppose a certain activity can devalue it simply by refusing to help, or helping half-heartedly. Need we add that Socialism is brought about by the whole-hearted efforts of socialists?

PADDINGTON BRANCH.

THIS IS URGENT

THE PARTY IS IN DIRE NEED OF FUNDS
TO CARRY ON ITS WORK. EVERY
MEMBER SHOULD CONTRIBUTE—*NOW*

THE PROPAGANDA OF OUR FUTURE

Reply to Comrade Turner

THE summary of A. Turner's letter to the E.C., published in the December *Forum*, contains a number of dubious assertions which cannot be accepted without evidence.

The first is that "our opponents no longer have theories". It is claimed that Gradualism (Labour), Dictatorship (Communist), and Minority Action (Anarchist) are now virtually finished. The "evidence" for this is the members YOU (meaning the reader) meet.

"You seldom meet a Labour or Communist Party member with whom you can argue economic and political theory," says Turner. This, even if true, is so flimsy as to hardly merit serious consideration. Modern political controversy in a literate world is mainly a matter of writing, and documentary evidence is the least one needs before forming any conclusions.

A little thought will show Turner's claim to be a figment of the imagination. If the argument is reduced to the narrow level of personal experience, then I contend that precisely the converse is true. You seldom meet a Labour or Communist member with whom you cannot argue economic and political theory.

Opponents' Theories?

WE frequently debate with opponents—Tory, Liberal, Labour, Fabian, etc. What do these opponents say in these discussions? Do they abandon or renounce the theories their parties have been founded on?

A debate recently took place with the Chairman of the London Fabian Society. Comrade Turner took part, attacking the Labour Party and Fabianism, its reformist basis and gradualist policy. If his letter is right, then his speech was wrong.

Every branch carrying on propaganda knows that Labourites and Communists still maintain

the same old theories week after week. They may make new applications, such as "the railways belong to us now" or "nationalisation of the Bank of England has lowered the cost of living", but at rock bottom they are the same old rubbish which the "S.S." was lambasting thirty years ago. The Hampstead Labour Party, for example, regularly open its meetings by claiming to propagate "practical Socialism", meaning the mixture as before.

If these parties no longer argue their theories, and "our case against them has been proved", how is it that they get 15 million votes and we get 250?

The question obviously arises: "proved" to whom? Comrade Turner is perhaps judging by his own experience. This is a logical fallacy—erroneously attributing a special feature of a small part of the whole. It could even be that he, personally, frightens opponents into silence.

Our case is by no means proved to the working class as a whole. If it is, then why are we foolishly wasting time trying to do something that is already done?

Irrefutable Evidence

TAKE the documentary evidence. Does *Let Us Face The Future* defend Gradualism? If not, why does it state that "Socialism cannot come overnight" (p. 6)? Does the Communist Party programme still advocate Dictatorship? Where has it dropped it?

Having read Turner's rather startling information about the Labour and Communist Parties and the Anarchists, I wrote letters to the organisations in question, asking if they still advocated the old theories associated with the names given by Turner, viz. Gradualism, Dictatorship and Minority Action. The replies are quite decisive. The answer is unmistakably YES.

The Labour Party sent a copy of *Labour and the New Society*, the policy and principles of Democratic Socialism, approved at our Conference at the end of 1950."

"In the Socialist view, all people also have the right to the basic necessities of life, to good health and a decent home. We cannot achieve these things overnight. We shall steadily plan and work towards them as we have been doing during the last five years." (p.12)

If this is not Gradualism, words have no meaning any more!

The Communist Party sent (by hand) "The British Road to Socialism", the Programme of the Communist Party issued by the Executive Committee, 1951, revised and adopted by the 22nd Annual Congress, April, 1952:

"The people cannot advance to Socialism, therefore without real political power, which must be taken from the hands of the capitalist minority and firmly grasped by the majority of the people, led by the working class. Only by this means can democracy become a reality.

"The enemies of Communism accuse the Communist Party of aiming to introduce Soviet Power in Britain and abolish Parliament. This is a slanderous misrepresentation of our policy. Experience has shown that in present conditions the advance to Socialism can be made just as well by a different road; for example, through Peoples' Democracy without establishing Soviet Power, as in the Peoples' Democracy of E. Europe."

It is evident that those Communists whom Turner has met have had him on!

The Anarchist *Freedom Press*, to their credit, were short, sharp and to the point:

"In answer to your letter, we cannot speak for anyone but ourselves. Our paper *Freedom* does advocate minority action, and does attack the State and the idea of political democracy."

Comrade Turner ignores all this irrefutable evidence because he "doesn't meet" Labourites, Communists or Anarchists who argue theory—"our case against them has been proved", he says.

If this view gains ground among Party members, then the effect may well be disastrous. There is no need for a political party to tell people what life will be like under Socialism if the case is already "proved". If this is the main job, a good writer can do it.

Evidence shows that Gradualism is more widespread among workers than ever, and that only a Socialist Party can blast it out at the hustings. This evidence is the huge Labour vote at elections. This does not deny the need for

explaining life under Socialism; nor does it underestimate the lively critical faculty which seeks to enrich dull propaganda.

A Serious Charge

TURNER tells us that members are "scared", "new speakers don't continue", "old speakers preclude questions of the future" and "people are unimpressed". All this is very curious for a Party whose opponents have all been demolished!

Turner wants it both ways. Thus he complains of Party speakers who don't deal with opponents who (he says) no longer exist. Who are these people who attack our speakers and "scare" them? They can only be opponents, and their questions cannot be other than opposing theories.

What is the meaning of the strange statement that "our speakers . . . unconsciously preclude questions of the future"? If this is so, they must be speaking in a dream or trance, and do not really *know* what they are saying or doing.

Where is the specific case or cases? Why is this serious charge against older speakers not supported by definite written evidence? Turner goes on to say that older speakers create the impression that "things have grown worse and will continue to do so". "*This does not fit the facts of experience*", he writes.

The first thing about this is that our speakers cannot create any impression which does not fit the facts of experience. If things are worsening, no speaker will convince people they are better, and vice-versa.

I hold, as a Socialist, that the conditions

have grown worse, and will continue to do so under Capitalism. Here again, Turner's view that things have improved, may well be the result of purely personal experience. If so, he overlooks the nature of Capitalism, in which the improvement of the one can only be at the cost of the many.

One may reasonably request evidence for the statement that things have grown better. If true, then obviously Socialism can best be shelved while we improve conditions further.

Repeated Contradiction

TURNER writes that when "our propaganda changes from just attacking Capitalism to describing Socialism, it will meet arguments and discussion . . . and the audience, from fearing you, will come to understand, admire and respect you."

This is merely a repetition of the contradiction already noted. In the first part of this letter, Turner says that the trouble is that our members are scared, i.e. *we fear them*: in the last part, *they fear us*. He thus neatly cancels himself out—without remainder. Both statements cannot be right. The second is the sound one.

The simple fact is that the very conception of Capitalism implies Socialism. It is impossible to attack it without indicating the alternative. The only possible reason for attacking it is the desire to replace it by something better, springing from knowledge of the future based on analysis of the present.

HORATIO.

THE FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE

"**HUMAN** beings are dependent on each other, they need each other. But human history up to now has been influenced by one fact: material production was not sufficient to satisfy the legitimate needs of all men. The table was set only for a few of the many who wanted to sit down and eat. Those who were stronger tried to secure places for themselves, which meant that they had to prevent others from getting seats. If they had loved their brothers as much as Buddha or Jesus postulated, they would have shared their bread rather than eat meat and drink wine without them.

"But . . . it is no slur on man that those who could sit at the table and enjoy the good things of life did not want to share, and therefore were compelled to seek power over those who threatened their privileges. This power was often the power of the conqueror, the physical power that forced the majority to be satisfied with their lot. But physical power was not always available or sufficient: One had to have power over the minds of people in order to make them refrain from using their fists.

"This control over mind and feeling was a necessary element in retaining the privileges of

the few. In this process, however, the minds of the few became as distorted as the minds of the many. The guard who watches a prisoner becomes almost as much a prisoner as the prisoner himself. The 'elite' who have to control those who are not 'chosen', become the prisoners of their own restrictive tendencies. Thus the human mind, of both rulers and ruled, becomes deflected from its essential human purposes, which is to feel and to think humanely, to use and to develop the powers of reason and love that are inherent in man and without the full development of which he is crippled . . ."

Dr. Erich Fromm in *The Forgotten Language*.

CORRECTION:

Article in *Forum* (February) "The Ballot and Comrade Canter", after sub-heading "Similarity between Canter and S.W.P.", second quotation should read "Mr. Goldman states" . . . not as was erroneously printed "Comrade Canter states". Readers will appreciate that the error makes an important change of meaning.—Editor.

PEOPLE OF THE WORLD — UNITE!

"Our propaganda should convey our ideas of socialism to ALL people, presenting our case to them as HUMAN BEINGS."

In writing that, Comrade Turner has indicated a significant development of thought within the Party. We are re-examining propositions which may have seemed self-evident and final in 1904, but which are now seen to be legacies from other organisations and past conditions.

OUR object is the introduction of classless society. This is possible when the majority of people are class-conscious (with reference to Capitalism) and are socialists (for Socialism). "Class-conscious" simply means seeing that there are two classes in society whose interests are opposed and that so long as Capitalism lasts there will be class struggle. *It has nothing to do with which class you belong to.*

When a capitalist becomes class-conscious, that doesn't mean he says to himself, "Yes, I see that Capitalism makes us all money-grubbers, makes us distrust and try to get the better of each other, brings wars in which even capitalists get killed—but I belong to the class that is top dog, so I'm going to oppose a world in which all those things won't exist."

We always say that Socialism is in the interest of the working class. So it is—but it doesn't follow that it's against the interests of the capitalist class. The antagonism of interests **ONLY HAS REFERENCE TO CAPITALISM.**

The proposition, then, is that being class-conscious and a socialist cuts across being a member of either class. The point is not whether capitalists can be socialists (we know they can)—nor is it that individual capitalists can "render good service to the workers' cause". Capitalists and workers alike can desire Socialism and feel it in their interest, because its basic attraction is not so much material gain as the ending of antagonisms.

Examine These Arguments

IF we accept the position outlined above, then we have to examine a number of points that are implicit or explicit in the Party's propaganda to date. They are:

1. *That the S.P.G.B. is equivalent to the working class party.* It follows that it is the working class who will establish Socialism, and that it will be in the teeth of minority opposition—capitalist class opposition. This argument depends on the assumption that the capitalist class are committed, come what may, to preserve "their" system.
2. *That capitalists have nothing to gain*

from Socialism. The inference is that they have something as good as, or better than, that which the workers stand to gain.

But those who say this, contradict themselves when they explain what Socialism is. If they fall back on the argument that some people have more to gain from Socialism than others, they are attempting to isolate one factor from many that make for socialist understanding. Ultimately they can arrive at the absurd principle that a person's socialist understanding is in inverse proportion to his wealth.

3. *That the capitalist class are committed, under all circumstances, to preserve "their" system.* How, we may ask, do we know it is theirs? Because they support and vote for it. But so do workers! Capitalism continues, not against the will of the working class, but because it is just as much the workers' choice as the capitalists'.
4. *That it is class struggle alone that can end class struggle.* It follows that the abolition of classes will come about through the disappearance of the capitalist class or their "defeat". We know they won't disappear apart from the disappearance of the working class, so it means that the battle for Socialism will line up workers on one side and capitalists on the other. In reality, it is *knowledge that there is class struggle that ends it, not the actual prosecution of that struggle.*
5. *That the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.* Capitalists, it seems, are powerless to help—even if they have socialist understanding, they cannot act on it in the way that workers can. But if the emancipation of the working class is the emancipation of all mankind, why shouldn't all mankind help? It is not workers acting as the working class who achieve Socialism. Workers acting as socialists achieve it.

6. *That the S.P.G.B. should address its propaganda to the 'working class alone', as coming from the working class alone.* This is a serious discrimination, because it implies that capitalists cannot understand Socialism or, understanding it, cannot want it.

"Some individual capitalists, owing to a greater understanding of the laws of social evolution, can see that Socialism is . . . practicable" (S.S. Dec. 1942). Then either (a) workers have similar views on Socialism (in which case there is no need for selectivity) or (b) workers want Socialism for different (exclusively working class) reasons—if so, what are these reasons?

7. *That the S.P.G.B. should admit that individual capitalists can help the working class, but such capitalists should be*

regarded as exceptions. (This is the unsatisfactory position implicit in most S.P.G.B. literature). It assumes that Socialism is exclusively the workers' cause.

But talk of the working class and the capitalist class only has reference to Capitalism. If we attempt to apply such terminology to Socialism, then we have within our ranks either an elite of capitalist-socialists or a bunch of traitors to the enemy. Both are, of course, unthinkable.

8. *"That we have not, and do not want, any rich benefactors, who might try to influence our policy."* (1950 Election Manifesto). Surely we don't think that capitalists' money is tainted? Or are we admitting that our policy and organisation are such that they *can* be influenced by money? How much can we give the Party without being accused of attempting to influence policy? We should avoid such questions by acknowledging that incomes under Capitalism are different and that therefore payments to the Party must vary.

Amend the D. of P.

IT may be noticed that what I am saying in this article conflicts with certain phrases in the Party's Declaration of Principles. In order that readers may be able to make comparisons, I suggest a number of amendments. If the present wording of the D. of P. is more in line with the facts than the suggested alternatives then there can be nothing to lose by re-examining it.

My arguments do not touch the analysis of society in the first four principles. The remaining principles may be amended along these lines:

5. *That this emancipation must take the form of establishing classless society.*
6. *Delete the working class and insert those advocating classless society.*
7. *That as all political parties either support class society or advocate its abolition, the party having as its sole object the establishment of classless society must be in opposition to every other party.*
8. *Delete the members of the working class of this country and insert all. Insert capitalist before system, and delete all after.*

* * *

My main concern in advocating these "revolutionary" changes is that the nature of our object determines the nature of the methods we use to attain it. Socialism is classless, and our methods must ultimately be in harmony with it. Whether our present D. of P. adequately describes these methods is a question that members must answer, knowing that criticism destroys only a weak case, but strengthens a sound one.

REPLY TO COMRADE McCLATCHIE ON BACKWARD PEOPLES

McCLATCHIE writes that he is not sure what I mean when I state that he "treads the very shaky soil of utopism". He adds "it is possible that there is a misunderstanding." And there is!

He writes: "When I use the phrase 'socialist ideas' I meant ideas about Socialism—a world in which people would live communal association . . ." In this statement he discloses the utopian approach—the ideal society into which men can move, regardless of their present culture, if only they accept that ideal as a possibility.

When I use the phrase 'socialist ideas' I mean those ideas about capitalist society which conclude with advocating a new society, the embryo of which evolves within the old. This is Socialism—the ideas and the movement, the outcome of which is the Socialist Revolution.

Now, I do not deny that men of whatever race or ethnic group have as well developed a central nervous system as any other, this being the physical basis for the power of thought. But I do maintain that until the social environment reaches the stage where capitalist exploitation and working class poverty are the general conditions, any ideas about Socialism will not be accepted. The ideas would not fit the facts.

WHEN he refers to the Australian aborigines absorbing capitalist culture, the comparison is not the same. It is not just that they absorb ideas, but that their social environment, in evolving into capitalist society, makes them receptive of capitalist culture.

I must point out a very apt part of one of his own rather extensive quotes, viz.:

"Babies have the same central nervous systems in all populations, but what they do, think and become, seems to depend entirely custom and on familial or social environment."

I do not claim, neither do I imply, that it is necessary to have a literary education to know that one is poor, insecure and suffering the horrors of war. But I do claim that it is necessary in order to understand *why*—and it is this understanding which marks off the socialist from the mere rebel.

McClatchie should not misquote Marx. The latter does not state anywhere "that the problems only arise when the solution is present", but that "the problem itself arises only when the *material conditions* necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation."

Note, the conditions for the solution of the problem, not the solution itself. The conditions for the solution of poverty and war are:

1. The highly developed technique of

capitalist production and the extensive means of communication, which conflict with the social relations of production.

2. A working class which understands the need for the change in the social relationships and has organised for it.

The solution is effected through the Socialist Revolution.

McCLATCHIE want to know what there is about the dependency upon wages without which an understanding of Socialism is impossible. The answer is working class literacy, without which capitalist society cannot function and without which the workers can never understand present society and the need for a new one.

He asks: "Are we to assume that all cultures must go through these three forms? If not, then why is Capitalism the elected system?" Answer: No! But capitalist society is the 'elected system' because it alone evolves the material conditions for the solution of the problem.

The last piece of criticism is very poor. It is not incumbent upon us few socialists to direct our energies towards spreading capitalist culture—this goes on in spite of us. We have a stiff enough job to spread socialist thought.

—H. G. HAYDEN.

DO WE UNDERSTAND AND WANT SOCIALISM?

Recent issues of *Forum* have contained several articles on the nature of the Socialist revolution, and what Socialism will be like. The best of them have put forward the view that an adequate conception of the Socialist revolution must be associated with an adequate conception of life now under Capitalism, both in its economic and psychological phases.

But it has been pointed out that all this understanding of life under Capitalism is virtually meaningless, except in relation to some idea of Socialism. It is one's idea of Socialism which enables one to see in Capitalism to-day the direction in which the decisive change to Socialism must be made.

It is this which makes it important to consider what our idea of Socialism is.

Understanding by Definition

At a recent Saturday forum at Head Office, Comrade Turner said to Comrade Evans: "All through your articles I get the idea that there's an intellectual élite who can understand Socialism conceptually—in their heads—and a mass of others who can't understand it unless they see and handle it—somehow or other—in concretized form." This is, I think, the very axis of the question.

Our propaganda has always been full of the idea that we understand Socialism, and that if

we can, others can, too. Having understood it, they can, if sufficiently numerous, establish it. It is enough, we say, for them to have the idea in their heads. They do not need to have seen anything like Socialism working before—they will know how to work it when the time comes, because they have understood it without seeing it. They will have understood it JUST AS WE UNDERSTAND IT.

Well, how do we understand it? What does our present understanding amount to?

SOCIALISM is a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by, and in the interest of, the whole community. It will be a world co-operative commonwealth, with no property, no money, no nationality and no privilege, and its leading ideas will be universality, co-operation and the brotherhood of man.

There, in sixty-three words, is our idea of Socialism.

Let us try two more ideas in the same way.

LOVE is an emotional experience deriving from a personal relationship between two people of opposite sexes. It involves the sexual factors of contraction and tumescence, a gestalt factor of "attraction" and various forms of special behaviour, depending on the culture concerned.

TYING A SHOELACE is an operation depending on a somewhat complicated three-dimensional pattern executed with the two ends of a piece of narrow material protruding from the unclosed end of a special opening through

which an extremity is placed into an appropriately-shaped container. The other extremities are used for the process, and the result is to close the opening securely, leaving a loop at either side.

So now we know what love is, and we can go ahead and experience it fully, without all this nonsense of going to places where one might meet somebody, getting into conversation, making a date, being anxious that the other person won't turn up, learning how to keep the acquaintance going, and all this other business which is the usual way in which most people get to understand love. We can understand it conceptually.

And we know what tying a shoelace is, and so we can just go ahead and do it. None of this low-grade stuff about taking the laces in our hands, watching someone else do it, trying to follow them step by step, crying with frustration, giving it up, going back to it, succeeding fumblingly, succeeding fluently, and finally doing it without thinking. That's only for the masses who can't understand in their heads.

Now what about Socialism?

Do We Understand Socialism?

It is the thesis of this article that what we understand of Socialism is the abstract idea of Socialism, we must live it; just as to have a concrete idea of love, it is essential to have been in love; and to have a concrete idea of tying a shoelace, it is essential to be able to tie a shoelace.

What we have now is the empty idea of Socialism. Our task as Socialists is to

fill out the empty idea, and for this purpose we need to see Socialism in concretized form as much as anyone else.

It is not some mythical "other people" who need to be shown how Capitalism evolves into Socialism—it is ourselves.

It is not some "inferior minds" who cannot understand Socialism until they see it taking over here and now—it is we who cannot.

The definition of love is not sufficient, and neither is the definition of Socialism. Until one has a concrete idea of tying a shoelace, one cannot tie a shoelace. Until one has a concrete idea of Socialism, one cannot introduce Socialism.

What we have now is an abstract idea, a definition. To achieve a concrete idea, we need the fuller development of Capitalism. It is not some others who need it, in order to catch up with us, the pacemakers; it is us, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, who need it for our own understanding.

The Concrete Idea

This will be a doctrine unfamiliar enough to arouse some misconceptions, and one may as well answer some of the more obvious ones at once, without waiting for them to be discovered.

(1) *So you understand it all?* No, the difficulty applies just as much to me as to everyone else. Nobody is clever enough to understand Socialism, because not enough of it has appeared yet.

(2) *This implies that we ought to support reforms, and the building of Capitalism in backward countries.* No, we ought to do what we have always done—point out that these

things, while having their good points, can never succeed in their ostensible aims while Capitalism rules. But we should take particular interest in noting two kinds of reforms: (a) the kind that encourage the sort of behaviour which must be the rule under Socialism—namely, co-operative behaviour more or less independent of financial considerations, and depending rather on need; and (b) the kind which could actually be incorporated into Socialism itself. We should obviously show some interest in these, because they help to show us what Socialism will be like, but we shouldn't support them, because their beneficial aspects are so limited and confined by Capitalism that, while Capitalism lasts, they are nothing but a snare and a delusion.

(3) *You talk about evolution, but this is a revolutionary party.* Ever heard of the transformation of quantity in to quality? It means that any big change is very often (and typically in growth-processes) the resultant of a number of seemingly insignificant small changes. It was the comprehension of this principle that enabled Marx to lead a revolutionary party while holding a doctrine of social evolution. But he saw, what some comrades to-day seem to have forgotten, that the small changes must take place not only in the ideas of the workers, but also in their working conditions, and in the way they carried on their daily lives. They must take place in the institutions of Capitalism, as well as in the heads of the workers. And their resultant, the big change, is Socialism. This is the revolution.

(4) *All we've got to do is to sit back, then?*

No, at the moment of the revolution is our business. If we can understand what is happening, if our idea of Socialism is adequate enough (that is, if it has evolved enough) we may be able to "shorten or lessen the birth pangs". Capitalism is preparing people for Socialism—but they don't know that; they don't know until we tell them. And they easily may not see, when the time comes, that Socialism is practically there. It is our job to tell them. But we won't be believed until our idea of Socialism is concrete enough—until it has evolved enough itself. And the discussion of Socialism is the conscious scheme of this evolution. Our job at present, then, seems twofold: (1) to discuss Socialism ourselves with increasing accuracy and completeness; and (2) to make more Socialists. This does not seem a very frightening conclusion.

There are some ideas, however, which do seem incommittable with the position outlined above—ideas still held by many comrades. Some of these are:— (a) That we should contest elections now; (b) That Socialism will depend mainly on handicraft production for its economic basis; (c) That the Socialist revolution will necessarily be homogeneously violent or non-violent; (d) *That because we have got the formula for H₂O, we therefore understand the whole of chemistry.*

J. C. ROWAN.

MARRIAGE UNDER SOCIALISM

At a recent Paddington Branch meeting, the subject, "Should Socialists Marry?" was discussed. I should have preferred the discussion to have been, "Will There Be Marriage Under Socialism?", because, in attempting to deal with our personal problems under Capitalism, we have to relate them to our whole surroundings and circumstances.

Many of us probably were married before we became Socialists. If our partners happen to be non-Socialists and we have a fairly comfortable life together, are we to say to our espoused: "Now that I am a Socialist, etc., I cannot live with you any longer?"

Then as to those not yet married—what is the alternative? The comrade who opened the discussion suggested "living together". But if we take away the trapping of modern marriage (the ring, the ceremony, and so on), what else is left but the act of "living together"?

It might be argued, from a legal point of view, that living together does not hold the partners, that it allows them to leave each other when they so desire, and that they are free in the sense that they can avoid the unwelcome publicity and expense of separation or divorce. But they have sought the exclusiveness of each other just as much as if they were legally married.

Visualise the Change

There are several aspects to consider in each individual's life in present-day society—the

family, the job, the residential area—and, like other aspects of our society, they are inescapable.

The wife, the mother, the home, offer some temporary refuge from the outside jungle, and if we don't have these the alternatives are the pubs, pictures, etc.

History shows us that there have been various forms of association between men and women. Marriage, as we know it to-day, has developed from other forms and is a "mine-and-thine", a property relationship. From its present form, how will it change under Socialism?

Engels pointed to what would disappear in a future society based on common ownership, and from this we can perhaps visualise what free association between men and women would be like. We can conceive of an association of mutual affection, free from economic and parental control; and of the bearing and rearing of children. Not "my child" or "your child", but society's children—the responsibility of all, and not the victims of a "best-dressed" competitive system nor subjects of one controller's dos and don'ts.

Free Association

To those addicted to the mysticism and sickly pious dope of modern marriage ties, the suggestion of free association immediately conjures up visions of unbridled sex-orgies (as if they didn't take place now!). Why this should be is a mystery, because where there is no

wealth, power or privilege to buy anything, free choice is the determining factor, and we would have to be very conceited to think that we are everyone's choice.

After all, marriage is supposed to be founded upon love and the freedom of choice of the parties concerned. A marriage without love is called immoral and one without the free choice of both parties is undesirable. Yet, although marriage is avowedly founded on love and freedom, free love is nevertheless accounted the opposite of marriage.

Then there is the question of the home. Home! What different visions this word conjures up. As we know it to-day, it is a self-contained little private lock-up where next-door neighbours are a nuisance because we are subjected to their garbage pails, blaring radios, hammering or squaling "brats". The only time that reserves are broken down and neighbourliness shows itself is in times of disaster. But the neighbourliness is there, and will develop where there is a community of interests.

The breaking-down of the barriers of sex-taboos and sex-segregation means an end of self-defensive mistrust and individual segregation. With this sharing of interest and work, a wider affection will be possible, eliminating the until-death-do-us-part attitude of those "living together" as well as those married.

G. HILBINGER.

HEREDITY & ABILITY — Reply to Comrade Bott.

IN January *Forum*, Comrade Bott set out to deal with my statement that "variation in innate individual abilities cannot be dismissed without dismissing the basis of biological evolution". (The word "abilities" is open to criticism, as it might be taken to mean that infants are born with all sorts of tricks which can only come from the environmental conditioning of whatever responses are innate. This, of course, was not intended.) The purposes of the statement were:—

1. To re-affirm that hereditary variation is the basis of organic evolution, without which there could be no natural selection, because there would be no (transmissible) differences to select from.
2. To insist that hereditary variation in the human species, like any other, is unquestionable.
3. To convert the fact of individual variation from an anti-socialist to a socialist argument, by showing it as enriching the total capacities of primordial societies, as facilities, the spontaneous division of labour, and therefore as a factor in precipitating a new form of evolution—history.
4. At a later stage, to show how it reinforces the need for Socialism and how it affects the character of Socialist society.

The need for leaders and leadership does not follow from the fact of differences of ability between men, whether innate or acquired. The Party's case against leadership in relation to the establishment and the running of Socialism rests on the unsuitability of leadership for these purposes and the absence of any need for it. 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.

Differences of ability, whatever their origin, are irrelevant to this understanding, as differences of gait are irrelevant to the common capacity to walk. The understanding of Socialism does not require identity or equality of abilities among men, but only the possession in an ordinary degree of the sense common to ordinary men. Nor is the running of Socialism endangered in any way by differences of ability. It is the absence of privilege in relation to the means of production which precludes differences of ability from becoming differences of power to oppress or exploit in any way. The classical definition of Socialist society turns on the give and take between different needs and abilities without distinction of race or sex, and without distinction between abilities innate or acquired.

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No Means of Testing

The difficulty of assessing the contribution made to our behaviour by heredity and environment respectively lies in the fact that while all behaviour is necessarily compounded of the two, there is no known means of testing what is purely innate. The innate endowment of the newly-born is already wrapped in congenital influences, and until we can know exactly what is in a sperm and an egg immediately before they unite, we cannot assess the influence of heredity on performance. But nor can we accept the alleged implication of "the behaviourist" that it counts for nothing. A child is not born nothing, and what it is enters into what it becomes. The "blank sheet" is only the measure of our knowledge.

Comrade Bott says it is pertinent to ask, in view of our ignorance, how we can know that differences of performance can depend on innate structure. What we *can't* do is to assess the influence on performance of the innate and the acquired. What we do know is that activity is compounded of the two, that each individual is innately unique, and that unlike causes produce unlike effects. It remains, of course, that in respect of various kinds of performance, differences of environment may compensate for differences of heredity. What we can't do, for lack of technique, is to examine the matter inductively, and what it is unless to do is to approach the matter empirically—"I knew a man . . .".

The inconclusiveness of Comrade Bott's empirical approach is to this extent a tribute to his caution. But his special pleading in a mistaken cause leads him into difficulties, and into what Huck Finn, in defence of Tom's truthfulness, called "just a few stretchers". He knows it isn't strictly good enough to argue from fairly uniform responses of infants that heredity counts for *nothing*, is compelled to concede "slight variations in innate structure", but reverts to 'nothing' in his final suggestion that "human beings are innately equal in potentiality".

Here we meet a difficulty of another kind. Equality is meaningless without reference to the thing in which there is equality. Different qualities cannot be equated. Nor can you sensibly say "men are equal in potentiality" without specifying potentiality for what. If you do, you leave it open whether you mean that all men have equal potentiality in every way, or whether you mean that all have a wide range of potentialities differing in detail but adding up (as it were) to general "equality". In the former case, there must be identity of innate structure: if there is any difference, the potentialities are different.

But if by equality is meant that the sum of their different potentialities is the same for all, then my view is that there is such a general tendency which we cannot establish inductively, and need not try to, because we can deduce it from facts and principles already established. This general tendency (the equality of potentiality as the "sum" of differences in detail), which for Comrade Bott remains a wishful suggestion, can be deduced by applying the Darwinian principles to the fact of hereditary

variation.

He uses a wrong method to arrive at a tentative conclusion with which to rebut a fact on which the firm deduction of this conclusion rests.

Seeing a Ghost

Comrade Bott's example of six men of different shapes who ran equally fast, is an example of the futility of this method for his problem. He does not consider (and in any case cannot know) what differences in training may have compensated for what differences in potentiality, and this kind of example cannot tell us what differences in potentiality may be irrelevant to or decisive in what kinds of performance.

But why does he follow these fruitless paths to nowhere? Because he sees a ghost. "If innate structural variations produce special abilities . . . some individuals could be endowed with innately superior thought mechanisms". So they could. But what I think Comrade Bott may have overlooked is that the more fundamental organs are the least subject to variation, this difference of variability being itself a product of organic evolution, a means of survival for the species. The shapes of noses vary beyond counting, but not the shapes of brains, for close conformity with a standard

CENTRAL LONDON MIDDAY MEETINGS

The passing of Comrade Lester has created a difficulty with regard to the running of the mid-day meetings in the City area. No longer can we rely on the Lincoln's Inn Fields being always available, nor can we ensure that our literature will be on sale at the various mid-day meetings.

Comrades who have the spare time during the day are asked to help to maintain the meetings. Statistics show that these meetings are among our most successful and it would be a pity to abandon them.

Volunteers are required (1) to accept responsibility for reserving the pitch; (2) ensuring that the Party literature is always there.

This matter is very urgent.

J. D'ARCY,

(Central Organiser)

nose has no survival value, while close conformity with the standard brain most certainly has. A gross disparity in either of the great integrative systems (the nervous or the glandular) produces monsters, and monsters (roughly speaking) do not mate. Those who conform least breed least, and this, with the tendency to reversion to the normal in the offspring of those who do breed, ensures the stability of species.

There is no ghost, and no need for a blank sheet to enshroud it. Some individuals could be endowed with innately superior, or inferior brain mechanisms. But if they are to be acceptably human, their variations must be slight, and they are rapidly lost in breeding. No sinister race of supermen can the loins of men produce, nor can they be overwhelmed by half-wits.

Improving the Classifications

No one need be "seriously disturbed" by the fact of hereditary variation. What might disturb is comrade Bott's belief that a case for

leadership rests on differences of ability. For if it did, it would be secondary how these differences were produced, and having shown that they were not innate, he would still have to show that differences of environment could not produce them either. On the "innate" side, Comrade Bott admits we know "almost nothing". But the Scottish verdict of "not proven" still leaves his position Irish. He accepts the Party's repudiation of the need for leaders, but believes that a case for leadership could rest on differences of ability, and by stressing the relative unimportance of inheritance he merely reinforces the power of environment to produce them.

Comrade Bott is in the special difficulty of dealing with science whose classificatory system is very unstable. The growth of a science is marked by, and dependent on, the development of classifications conforming better with the real world, as in the case of Marxian economics. But it is not enough merely to jingle the counterfeit coins of a primitive

science to hear how cracked they sound. It is the socialist—if he is a pioneer still—who is in the best position to make sense of the social "sciences" by improving the classifications, and clearing the decks of the questions wrongly stated.

The fundamental sameness of men is as obvious as the fact that they differ, and there is no need to place ourselves in the vulnerable position of repudiating hereditary variation in reply to the false deductions of some geneticists. Better, surely, to use this fact in relation to the genesis of history and to the question what sort of an animal man is—which is one of the necessary terms of reference for a disciplined materialist discussion of what Socialism will be like. The need for this discussion as the mainspring of socialist propaganda is what these articles on the Socialist Revolution are about.

F. EVANS.

NEWSPPOINTS

British Exploiters Only

MR. J. A. BOYD-CARPENTER, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, answered fears expressed in the Commons last night by Mr. Jack Jones, former steelworker and Socialist M.P. for Rotherham, that after denationalisation, steel workers might find themselves working under a foreign boss, perhaps one the Krupp type.

The Government had adequate powers to prevent the industry falling under foreign control, Mr. Boyd-Carpenter said.

—*Daily Mail*, 24.2.53.

* * *

Home Truth

IN Britain to-day, nearly 1,000,000 families are still without their own homes.

Most of them are living with in-laws. In addition, 1,250,000 people are living in other people's homes as lodgers.

"What price now the old cry that an Englishman's home is his castle?"

"Unfortunately, the circumstances are such that the desire to have your own home does not constitute housing need," the official explained.

"Where do we go from here?" Nearly a million married couples, many living with their in-laws, echo that question to-day.

And how many of the younger generation are beginning to wonder whether their hopes of making a home are mere dreams?

—*News of the World*, 1.3.53.

* * *

"Socialist" Speculation

SEMYON TERYTYOV was a modest and efficient Russian laboratory official by day. But by night he became "The Nose"—an underworld millionaire who led a band of speculators who bought winning State lottery

bonds at a discount and invested the money in diamonds. He made millions of roubles, which he kept in milk cans buried in the basement of a country home. Now Terentyov has been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for speculating in State bonds and diamonds.

The story was told to-day by "Komsomolskaya Pravda" which described him as a combination of Silas Marner and an arch-swindler and as a "cave-man fossil millionaire."

—*Manchester Guardian*, 14.2.53.

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The Challenge of Competition

"BIG Business" is just as subject to the challenge of competition, the rule for the rank-and-file of the 4,000,000 undertakings of the private enterprise system of the United States, as smaller concerns are, according to confidential and other data soon to become available.

A large majority—sixty-four—of the 100 largest industrial corporations in 1909, ranked by size of assets, lost their top position by 1948 to newcomers. Only thirty-one maintained their top position consistently. In the last four decades there never has been a single period in which the ranks of the biggest of big businesses have not been subject to change, with newcomers moving up and some of the biggest becoming relatively smaller.

—*New York Times*, 16.2.53.

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Poverty Amidst Plenty

ONE of the major domestic problems confronting President Eisenhower's new Administration is the disposal of millions of tons of surplus butter after unexpectedly high winter production and a switch to margarine by the American public, objecting to high butter prices. Under the farm price-support

laws, all excess production must be bought by the Government to prevent a glut on the market from forcing prices below their guaranteed level. The Government is seeking a means of disposal without downright destruction or offending the farmers.

The Agriculture Department is now trying to give away some of the surplus, because there is little hope of ever selling much of it back to commercial distributors, unless drought or other unusual circumstances cut down summer production.

Americans are at present eating annually only half the 16.7 pounds per head they used immediately before the war. Consumption of cheaper margarine has jumped from the pre-war level of 2.9 pounds per head to about eight pounds.

—*Manchester Guardian*, 26.3.53.

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What Price Sport?

MONEY is the bandit that holds up sport at pistol point. The old notion that "the game's the thing" is more dead than the one-time belief about the earth being flat.

Watch how pro. tennis promoters raid the ranks of amateur players. As soon as a prospect fights his way to the top, the professional circus men move in. It is easy to blind prey by throwing gold dust in their eyes.

Professional boxing has also long ceased to be a sport. World Championships have become monopolies of big business. Titleholders are carefully built up by a string of victories over nobodies. The "house-fighter" has become an institution all over the world.

Big business doesn't care who is the best fighter. The important thing is, "Who will draw the most money at the gate?"

—*Sunday Pictorial*, 1.3.53.