

**Dialectics and Factory  
Organisation**

A.S. Teward

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A Review

**Aspects of Social  
Democracy in Britain**

T. Reilly

CORRESPONDENCE

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**THE MARXIST**

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THE TASK OF THE PROLETARIAT ITSELF"

From the Editorial Committee

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# DIALECTICS AND FACTORY ORGANISATION

by A S Teward

The attitude of many "nominal" Marxists towards dialectics is very much like that of many "nominal" Christians towards religious dogma - they pay lip service to it but do not regard it as having any bearing on the way they conduct their day to day activities.

The tenet, "Marxism is a guide to action" is repeated like a catechism and with as little real meaning.

Yet if we are to prove the superiority of Marxist philosophy over all others, it can only be done by demonstrating its practicality.

To those who have recently become readers of *The Marxist* and who are actively involved in working class struggle but who as yet remain to be convinced that the Marxist philosophy has a vital role to play in that struggle, the use of words like "dialectics" can be off-putting. The view is often expressed that such terms are needlessly obscure and have little relevance to their daily confrontation with the employer.

The attitude of the "nominal" Marxists referred to above, unwilling or unable to close the gap, only serves to confirm this opinion.

The fact remains that Marxism is a science and the study of any scientific method of working necessitates the understanding of those words and phrases used to describe

the principles and philosophy that constitute the basis of that particular science.

It is also a fact that difficult and involved words rarely lend themselves to easy translation into words of one syllable without introducing a dangerous vagueness as to what is being said or written.

Having said that it has to be admitted that many who should know better employ their more extensive knowledge as a means of establishing their superiority rather than seeking to help others achieve a better understanding.

Perhaps the most effective method of developing understanding is in the process of application. This should certainly apply to Marxism, for the fact that it is a guide to action establishes that it is not just a means of understanding, but of changing Man's environment and thereby Man himself.

## Dialectic?

Lenin defines dialectics as follows:

1. "In its proper meaning, dialectics is the study of the contradictions within the very essence of things."

(Philosophical Notebooks)

2. "Development is the "struggle" of opposites."

(Selected Works)

Dialectics contends that all development, all progress arises from the inter-action of opposing tendencies inherent in all things, in all phenomena of Nature.

Having done no more than identify the subject and hope that a moment's reflection will provide innumerable examples to illustrate the point, the question arises, how are we going to relate this to working class struggle?

If all development arises from the internal contradictions that are inherent in all phenomena, then how do we conceive unity, for this must influence everything we do.

Indeed, a moment of reflection provides support for the dialectical method. Consider for the moment the conception of unity as an end in itself. We have annual reminders of this peculiar specimen at the Y.U.C. where the leadership regularly congratulate themselves on the fact that, whilst they have not actually done anything, they have maintained unity.

This is the unity of the graveyard and it must be pointed out that even there the unity is only philosophical, it is not organic. To see unity as a permanent condition sufficient unto itself is the negation of all development. It is a still-born nightmare. It is a fantasy.

Rather is unity temporary, relative and conditional. To be real it must have an aim that is its limit, its purpose and its value.

And nothing could be of more immediate and practical value in working class struggle than to have a clear idea of what unity is all about and how we can use it.

An example, a very recent one, concerns a factory employing a semi-skilled workforce of about three hundred. Over half these are women and probably three-quarters immigrants, mainly from India or Pakistan. These factors are to establish that there is nothing peculiar or special about the example chosen.

Previous attempts to organise had failed for a number of reasons, basically because the act of becoming organised had been seen as a process of buying "cover" from the union in the form of paid officials (experts) who would, when called, descend upon the management and blast them with their multi-barrelled rule books.

On this occasion the intensifying pressure on the workers to produce more and yet more fed the growing resentment to a point where it exploded into the decision to join the union and thereby challenge the employer's assumed right to do as he pleased with them.

In the early stages some assistance and encouragement was given by certain members of the supervision who were themselves suffering from the same pressure, had recently joined ASTMS and who saw the organised workers providing a foundation for their own precarious position. Doubtless they also realised that any improvement in wages and conditions gained by the workers would automatically pass to them.

As stewards in a "sister" factory we were contacted and asked for advice and any assistance we could give. At the outset the workers wanted a factory meeting to discuss and decide what to do and they asked management for such a meeting.

The management expressed total sympathy

with their aims in mind they had a suitable "area" in which such a meeting might be held. They suggested it should take place outside the factory confines.

As the weather was cold and wet, the workers took exception to this and expressed their displeasure by stopping work. It took three-quarters of an hour for the management to discover that they had been rather hasty and to agree not only to the meeting but also to the attendance of a steward from the aforementioned "sister" factory.

At that meeting only two points were emphasized:-

1. That the workers as a body had the right to make their own decisions, that they should at all times exercise that right and that no one, whether management, union official or shop steward should be allowed to usurp that right.

2. That shop stewards are elected and if they persist in deviating from the principle just mentioned, they must be replaced by others more reliable. Mistakes would be made but by freely admitting them valuable lessons would be learnt to the benefit of everyone other than the employer.

Stewards were elected at this meeting but no attempt was made to persuade the wavering sections into participating. This task was left to the workers on the site.

Indeed, then and on all occasions since, whilst offering guidance we have put the emphasis on giving full play to the opportunity for people to make the essential decision themselves.

This has meant that, when asked for advice

on a specific question we have tried to separate the "constituent parts", give them some perspective, but have always endeavoured to leave it so that the final decision was theirs.

To the stewards we emphasized the vital importance, not only of informing and involving the members at all stages, but of relying implicitly upon them.

### Management's Success

Having conceded the first round, the management then tried to contain the position by confusing the stewards with rules, procedure, etc., insisting that there must be a steward from every department, insisting on the formation of a works' committee, whilst searching diligently among the stewards for any who might be subverted.

In their endeavour, taking full advantage of the inexperience of the stewards, they achieved a degree of success. Following the submission of a wage claim, in the process of which workers had expressed strong objection to anything in the nature of a productivity deal, the stewards were persuaded to accept a minimal all-round increase plus a further sum dependent upon an increase in productivity.

Following a site meeting at which many, if not all, the members voted without being aware of all the contents of the proposals, the senior stewards signed the agreement.

However, when the management tried to put the proposals into operation on the production lines they met some determined resistance from the workers involved. Not only was there no increase in the figures, in some cases there was a reduction.

The supervision, who had previously supported the efforts of the workers, now saw the situation in a different light. They favoured a degree of militant organisation but envisaged themselves as always being in control at the appropriate moment thus establishing and emphasizing their vital status in the chain of managerial command.

Attempts by them to implement that command were unsuccessful but their apparent "defection" caused some initial despondency.

Further, a division appeared among the workers themselves over the question of productivity. Not unnaturally the strongest opposition arose among the production workers whilst those who were not immediately affected, storekeepers, inspectors, etc. were inclined to be rather more "reasonable" about the whole thing.

Despite these developments, opposition to the "agreement" mounted. In the course of this, one of the senior stewards was replaced and the management were forced to concede further negotiations, with the workers again expressing their opposition to any kind of productivity deal.

At this stage, possibly feeling the pressure, the stewards decided to ask District Committee to intervene. One of the Divisional Organisers was asked to attend to the issue. However, regardless of the wishes of the members, the stewards were informed that the original agreement must stand as it had been signed.

Eventually, as a result of this advice, the stewards recommended to the workers that the productivity clause in the original agreement should still stand. In order to render this more palatable to the work-

ers the amount offered was increased but even so it was only reluctantly accepted, particularly by the production workers.

Already some workers are expressing the opinion that they have learnt lessons from this episode and are determined not to repeat the mistakes.

Whatever the outcome, two things are apparent. First, that the process towards building an organisation within this factory is in its early stages, for though the workers have joined a trade union and elected stewards, this is only the first step and not, as we are so often persuaded to believe, an end in itself.

Second, providing that the membership adheres to the two principles stressed at their first meeting, that process will continue despite the efforts of the management to subvert the leadership, and despite the mistakes that will be made from time to time.

Earlier we mentioned emphasizing to the stewards the importance of involving and relying upon the members in all that they tried to do. An elementary, even trite piece of advice, yet the indications are that, for a second time, it has not been heeded. An example, and one is needed, of just how important it is to go back to fundamentals and to make them stick.

But the most important thing is to recognise the role that unity has played in the development to date. At the beginning there was the unifying of workers and a section of supervision around the central aim, this being the establishment of an organisation.

With the approach to the question of unity

outlined in the opening paragraphs of this article it was possible to foresee that this support was of a temporary nature, that its aim fell short of the workers' aim and that it would break away at an early stage in the development. So it was possible to avoid the error of making this unity a central pillar of the struggle whilst utilising it fully for as long as it lasted.

When the split came the stewards were able to take it in their stride and instead of weakening, it acted as a refining and strengthening of the workers' role.

In the second instance, there was the unification of the workers around the wage claim and the division that developed between the direct and indirect workers. This division was foreshadowed to some extent in the very early stages when the main pressure for getting organised came from the direct workers who were feeling the pressure most immediately whilst the indirect were vague and indecisive.

Again, this kind of division exists in every factory. It is recognising that these divisions exist and understanding the reasons for them that constitutes the first and biggest step towards developing the ability to build unity of a real and positive kind, a working tool.

The alternative is a dead "united front" of the social-democratic variety that is forced to sacrifice any practical purpose it might have had in order to maintain its precarious and utterly useless existence.

The next part of this article is an attempt to use the method of, what the Chinese comrades call learning by negative example.

## LEARNING BY NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

The other example shows how a contradiction between groups of workers can, if improperly handled, lead not towards a unity which creates the conditions for further advance but, on the contrary, to a sharpening of those contradictions, a greater disunity and the prospect of further setbacks for the whole.

The struggle took place in an engineering factory employing about one thousand five hundred manual workers, the majority being women and semi-skilled men. It is part of a combine which employs in the region of 15,000 manual workers. This particular factory is a member of the Engineering Employers' Federation, but some other factories in the same combine are not federated.

### Organisation

Although the factory has been nominally organised for about thirty years the militant leadership that once existed has been eliminated by redundancies and other methods, but also by its own mistakes.

The major mistake of this leadership, (of which the writer was part), in the period in question was its failure to recognise that superior organisation and action by a vanguard is no substitute for mass action, or at least mass support.

We advocated leftist courses of action which narrowed the basis of our support, thus strengthening the position of these more backward elements who were in favour of pursuing a policy of co-operation with the management.

Because of our leftism we failed to

appreciate that the changing economic climate in the country and in the company in particular, would reflect itself in the thinking of the workers.

In the immediate post war years the company was in a semi-monopoly position. It was a sellers market and wage increases were fairly easy to come by. A stoppage of work for only a few hours would achieve results and as a consequence of this it was easy to be "militant".

As the general economic climate changed and the attitude of the management became tougher, victories for the workers became more costly in terms of time lost and as a result, "militancy" began to fall off.

The workers had drawn the necessary conclusions from the changing circumstances and counted the cost.

We should have taken note of the changed mood of the workers and drawn the conclusion that different tactics were needed. We should also have allowed time for the workers to adjust themselves to the new situation and taken this into account so that our propaganda could play its part in this mental adjustment.

Instead we persisted in our leftist attempts to initiate struggle in the belief that all that was needed was an intensification of our propaganda effort.

In consequence of these mistakes, the factory organisation, such as it was, became dominated by corrupt and class collaborationist elements, mainly organised in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

When election of Officers, or important

policy decisions were being taken on the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, additional N.U.G.M.W. shop stewards would make their appearance in sufficient numbers to ensure that any proposals likely to lead to a clash with Management would be defeated.

At that time, the Communist Party branch which then existed in the factory concentrated its efforts on trying to win control of the J.S.S.C. instead of paying prime attention to building up a shop floor movement which would have swept it away.

The undue emphasis on influencing and dominating committees arises basically from a fear of really drawing the mass of workers into decision making.

It produces the method of working in which workers are only "consulted" when a cut-and-dried line of action or policy is ready to put before them and any independent initiative not provided for by the leadership must be opposed lest the workers be "misled".

Because of this method of work the mass of workers tended to see the struggle as a factional dispute which did not concern them and the Management were able to give fairly open support to the class collaborationist elements and pick off potential militant leaders without incurring mass opposition.

It can be seen from this example how leftist policies (o.e. those which do not take into account the objective situation and the needs and level of development of the people directly concerned) lead to results, the very opposite of what was intended.

The Party branch was decimated and it was



temporarily that a new centre be established around which to build a new leadership.

In the circumstances it was felt that the most feasible method would be to establish a Shop Stewards' Committee based on the AEU because practically all the best elements in the factory were within its membership.

The majority of A.E.U. stewards could not be won for this proposal. They were too concerned with maintaining a formal unity to accept the idea that a split at that juncture could create the right conditions for unity of a better kind.

When D.C. finally awakened to the realisation that the situation was serious and decided to bring it under control, methods were adopted which placed more reliance on coercion than persuasion.

A shop steward who was elected convenor by the other stewards was opposed by District Committee which appointed one in his stead.

The point is not that one of these stewards is better than the other but that the appointed steward was from the toolroom and whatever his personal qualities, did not have the confidence of the other stewards in the factory.

It is understandable that ~~old timers~~ (old in ideas, not age), because of their belief that the craft trades are the core of the organisation, should place reliance on the toolroom workers, but the result was that the District Committee's only influence in the factory was through this section and, because of their generally elitist attitude towards other workers, a less likely centre for uniting the progressive forces in the factory would have been hard to find.

It was section, close to District Committees but isolated from the mass of the workers, which decided to press for the re-establishment of a toolroom differential which they claimed had been eroded by years of flat rate increases in the factory.

This development happened to coincide with the decision of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions to break off national negotiations with the Engineering Employers' Federation.

The Unions had submitted a claim for a reduction of the working week to 35 hours increased holidays and increases in the nationally agreed minimum time rates for industry.

A claim for an all-round increase for all engineering workers had been submitted but had been quietly dropped in a desperate attempt to avoid a confrontation with the employers.

When the Federation refused to move beyond an offer of £1.50 on the national minimum skilled rate which would affect very few members, the leadership were faced with the necessity of at least going through the motions of leading a fight and it was decided to embark on a policy of plant bargaining.

As a consequence of this decision the district committees were made responsible for organising action in their respective districts in support of the national claim.

The district committee which we referred to earlier had, over a number of years obtained a well deserved reputation for militant leadership, but this had long since given way to mere posturing and the sending of "militant" resolutions to National

Committee, the policy making body of the Union.

Faced with this new challenge the factions which dominated it were forced into the position of trying to show that the leading role which each claimed to occupy could be demonstrated in practice.

As this mass influence which they claim to exercise is largely non-existent outside of their imagination, both of these factions sought for some expression of militancy which they could exploit for their own ends.

The discontent of the toolmakers (seventy in number) referred to above, gave them the opportunity they so desperately needed.

The toolmakers were promised full backing in terms of strike pay and a district levy if they took strike action, the proviso being that they should include the national claim in with their local one.

As this meant the promise of an income in the region of £20 per week whilst on strike, it was one of the factors which clouded the judgement of the workers involved when it came to making an objective assessment of the situation and undoubtedly tipped the scale in favour of strike action at that particular time.

Any objective assessment made it obvious that they would not receive any support from the majority of workers in the factory, particularly in view of the fact that a large majority of workers in the factory and in the combine had already settled on an all round increase in wages.

There was, however, one factor which could have been developed into a positive element in the situation.

The other skilled sections in the factory were dissatisfied with the general wage settlement and their inclusion in any action would have created the objective conditions in which a resounding victory on the wages issues would have been possible.

This course of action was not taken for two main reasons.

One was the elitist attitude of the toolmakers which led them to believe that they could win the struggle on their own. The confused the degree of skill needed to perform their labour function for the employer with the degree of strike power able to be used against the employer by virtue of the position occupied by them in the productive process.

The two are by no means synonymous. The dockers and car assembly workers have great strike power which is reflected in their high rates of pay but neither of them are skilled in the sense that they require an apprenticeship.

The other reason was that the opportunists on District Committee were so concerned with solving their own factional problems that they could not allow the necessary time to resolve the contradictions amongst the workers which were absolutely necessary to ensure success.

The situation would have been difficult enough in normal circumstances but as the factory struggle was taking place in the context of the national campaign the possibility of winning even their original local demand in full was nil.

### The Counter Attack

The weakness of the toolmakers' position was underlined when work began to dry up due to the shortage of tools.

The Employer, who had evidently made a more objective assessment of the situation than the people leading the strike, made an offer on wages which was turned down by the men on strike.

The management then informed the remainder of the shop stewards in the factory that some workers would be laid off for the duration of the strike and that others would be put on a three day week.

The fact that this was accepted without serious opposition was an indication of the lack of any militant leadership in the factory but still no correct conclusions were drawn.

The Employer, whether he understood dialectics or not, was certainly aware of the contradictions which existed amongst the workers and took further steps to exploit them in his own interests.

The necessary tools had already been made outside so the tool setters became the next target of attack. They were told that unless they agreed to use the "black" tools the factory would be shut down completely.

In a well organised, well led factory this would have been the opportunity to challenge the management, exploit its contradictions and create the conditions in which the strikers could have been extricated from their exposed position but, as was expected, the employer retained the initiative, pressure from the mass of the workers compelled the setters to use the "black" tools and full production was resumed.

At this point the only possibility of retaining some bargaining power was by employing the tactic of mass picketing both at

the main factory and those where the "black" tools were being made.

Although this was suggested to them it was not carried out and, significantly, it was not encouraged by the District Committee.

The toolmakers wanted to remain "respectable" and the District Committee did not want to clash with the Industrial Relations Act.

At the time of writing the strike is in its fifteenth week with the only hope of a settlement hinging on a possible agreement being reached for a wage increase for the other skilled sections remaining in the factory.

One of the side effects of the strike in factory A was the ripples which it caused in factory B in the same combine.

Some may assume that workers' solidarity would ensure that immediate help would be forthcoming for the men on strike but this is a form of idealism because it fails to take into account that contradictions exist between different groups of workers and even between individual workers.

A couple of years previously the workers in factory B had engaged in a strike lasting some eight weeks and during the whole of that period they had not received any support from the workers in factory A.

The stewards in factory B had also for many years tried to establish a working relation with those in factory B but with no success.

Because of this background there was not simply a lack of support for the strikers but a definite anti-feeling.

This came to a head when the collection of

the district levy came to the fore.

It established a temporary unity between different factions.

- (a) the small group of backward elements who are only concerned with taking all and giving nothing.
- (b) those who still resented the treatment previously meted out by the workers at factory A and who argued "they did not support us, so why should we support them".
- (c) those who felt resentment that union dues had been increased, big increases given to the Officers but a refusal to increase the strike pay above that laid down by Rule.
- (d) those who felt that, as all decisions affecting the workers in the factory were always taken by factory vote, the same procedure should apply to the imposition of a levy instead of, according to Rule, taken at Branch meetings throughout the District.

The first factory meeting was a catastrophe in the eyes of some people and at the second meeting some unity had been established between the factions referred to above.

A vote on the levy was demanded and when it was pointed out that there would be no vote because the matter was Branch, not factory business, there was a furor.

At that point it was probably true to say that a majority existed for a line of refusing to pay the levy.

A unity of this kind would only have served to strengthen the most backward elements, therefore it was necessary to meet the challenge head on even though the vanguard were weak in terms of active popular support.

The next move was to put forward ideas which would unite the majority and isolate the minority of backward, individualistic

elements and get a better understanding of the role of the trade unions in the present situation, the likely trends for the future and the problems of building a new class organisation of workers.

This latter point had to be treated with some care because although many workers are dissatisfied with the trade unions they do not on the whole envisage the practical possibility of creating a new organisation which will not repeat the mistakes of the present one.

Some comrades were disturbed at the confusion of ideas at factory meetings but as a result of discussion we came to the conclusion that the reason for these disturbed feelings was our superficial understanding of dialectical development.

In spite of reading Stalin and Mao on dialectics the underlying influence of social democracy still continued to exert itself. By this we mean that the abstract concept of dialectical change with the new overcoming the old in the course of struggle did not fully express the rich content of real development. In place of the two clearly defined forces which appear in the textbook examples there was a complex association of forces or trends in which the line which we considered to be correct was in a minority.

To have attempted to hammer all these trends into a pattern previously determined by ourselves would not only have been politically wrong, it would have been disastrous in the sense that it would have resulted in the victory of the most backward elements because it would have been a case of the minority trying to dictate to the majority.

Instead, we analysed the different trends

which comprised this apparently reactionary block and concluded that they in turn contained contradictory tendencies which were the result of the incomplete summing up of their experience by the workers concerned.

The tiny group in (a) came from backgrounds which gave rise to selfish and individualistic tendencies but the fact that they had recognised the necessity from their point of view of getting a collective decision reversed showed that they also recognised the power of the collective.

It had to be demonstrated that whatever their personal feelings, deviation from collective decisions would not be tolerated by the majority of workers.

This was done by pointing out to them that any attempt to use the situation to break the collective decision that all workers must be members of the Union would not be tolerated.

They had no doubt about the view of the vast majority on this question.

Those in group (b) were on a higher level of development because they fully accepted the collective discipline but their consciousness did not go beyond the level of individual factory decisions and were also confused on the question of now supporting workers who had refused to support them in the past.

The contradiction existing here was between the objective situation as it actually existed and the subjective aspect, the workers' consciousness of the true position.

In this case, however, the contradiction could be resolved in a relatively short

period of time by taking steps to raise the understanding of the workers concerned.

The opportunity arose when some of them indicated that they intended to go to the Branch meeting to "stir it up". Arrangements were made for some of the strikers to be at the meeting and, as a result of a prolonged discussion which was not possible in the short time available at factory meetings, they changed their attitude quite considerably.

At the next factory meeting they said that they now saw the thing in a different light.

Life being what it is there was no sharp distinction between the groupings outlined above with the consequence that the discussion at the factory meeting proceeded naturally to discuss the question of the need to support workers on strike.

This however could not and did not take place in isolation from the question of the role and indeed usefulness of trade unions in the foreseeable future.

Distrust of trade union leaders has long been a feature of the industrial scene but now the whole basis and structure are being questioned.

This is not confined to one factory or one district and there is a fear of it amongst the "old guard" who cannot envisage any organisation of the industrial working class other than the present set-up which was suited to conditions under capitalism in its ascendancy but totally unsuited to conditions in which capitalism is in decline and continually enmeshed in contradictions which can only be resolved at the worker's expense as long as capitalism survives.

## WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT DIALECTICS

The blunders made by the Party Branch, Union District Committee, and Toolmakers, serve to illustrate the consequence of departing from the philosophic basis of dialectical materialism which asserts that matter, the material world in which we live, is primary and that ideas are more or less a reflection of this material world.

In each case the blunders arose from the attempt to tailor the actual existing circumstances to suit certain preconceived ideas.

The lesson is that correct ideas can only arise from practice, from a detailed investigation into all the circumstances, the facts, events and their interconnections.

If it is felt that this is gilding the lily somewhat by stating the obvious, we point out that as far as the comrades in the Party Branch and District Committee of the Union are concerned, they have been for many years members of political parties which formally embraced Marxism as their basic philosophy. Further, a very similar event is taking place in an adjacent district of the Union and the comrades involved there have very similar backgrounds to the ones whom we are discussing.

These errors do not arise by chance, they are the result of an incorrect philosophical standpoint, (consciously or subconsciously accepted), which holds that the ideas of leaders can, if propagated strongly enough, determine the course of social development.

The standpoint of dialectical materialism on this question is stated by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto.

"The theoretical propositions of the Communists in no way rest upon ideas or principles invented or discovered by this or that universal reformer. They are but the general expression of actual conditions of an existing class struggle, of a historical movement going on under our own eyes."

It can be seen, according to this statement, that leaders, be they individuals or groups, cannot determine a development, they can only intervene in a process which is already taking place independently of them, in order to assist the development of one or other aspects of that process.

This comes back to the point that, in order to influence events, these actual events and their internal contradictions, laws of movement, must be closely studied and understood.

We hope that this article will go some way towards demonstrating the importance of theory and how it derives from practice and in turn serves practice.

Further, we hope it will serve to encourage the militant shop floor worker to appreciate that dialectical materialism is a practical tool to be used in the solution of practical problems and encourage him or her to take up the study of the subject by reading such works as *On Practice*, *On Contradiction*, and *On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among The People*.

We welcome criticism of this article, for its imperfect formulations or for any other reason but particularly if the criticism is for the purpose of deepening our common understanding of this science and making it the property of the entire working class.

## ASPECTS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

by Tom Reilly

When looking at social democracy in Britain it is important to recognise that it is an international movement. I believe the best way to demonstrate this is to show the central role in British Imperialism played by social democracy. The main protagonist of social democracy in Britain is the Labour Party and because of this requires the closest examination.

Looking at the politics and Philosophy of social democracy it is apparent that it exists as an inherent part of capitalism - the alternative to the Tories as the Democrats are to the Republicans in the United States. They have posed as the friends of the working classes and have sought to demonstrate that 'friendship' by attempts to reform the system.

The contradictions within capitalism, however, are creating numerous problems for social democracy, for reforms are no longer a credible form of deceit. The crisis has ensured that not only has the sop of reforms to the working class been necessarily abandoned, but whether Tory or Labour form the government, the state remains the same and it is not the state of the working class.

The state - its development, role and dependence upon classes has never been understood by social democracy, indeed they have been denied.

Engels, in "The Origin of the Family,

Private Property and the State", says:

"The state is by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', the image and the reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather is it the product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction within itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonism which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in sterile struggle, a power seemingly standing above society became necessary for the purpose of moderating the conflict of keeping it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the State."

The Labour Party has become entangled in an argument that if the state owns an industry - 'nationalised' industries such as coal and steel, etc. - that industry is then the property of the people. The workers, in some way, own the nationalised industries and have some control over them through their 'elected representatives'. The result of continuing that argument to a logical conclusion would be that the working class

are part of the state and not diametrically opposed to it. This is part of the class collaborationist rhetoric continually expounded by the social democrats.

Social democracy is not a science, it follows no law and has no theory. It is a parasite feeding upon the working class. It is not aimed in any specific direction, rather is it carried on the switch-back of capitalism. When conditions suit, apparent support is given to the class struggle, only to be contradicted when the required votes or popularity has been won.

To demonstrate conclusively the role of social democracy in general and the Labour Party in particular one must look at its record on the class struggle and position in relation to the state.

#### Labour 'In'

Firstly and briefly, a look at what has at times been a schizophrenic record of government by the Labour Party. We begin with the means test of the thirties, through the wage freeze and euphoria of nationalisation of the forties and conclude with the wage freeze and 'In Place of Strife' of the sixties. It is with a more detailed examination of the Labour administration beginning 1964 and ending 1970 that the true anti-working class role of the Labour Party becomes crystal clear.

The feature that stands out in this period is the brutal manner in which the Labour government were prepared to use the state machine against the working class. Within four weeks of the Wilson government being re-elected in 1966 one of the biggest industrial disputes for many years was to break out. The seamen (N.U.S.), who Wilson

had previously described as a 'company union', had submitted a modest claim, which was rejected. The union, forced by the rank and file, called a strike and were immediately met and opposed by a hostile government. Wilson appeared on television and denounced the seamen as acting against the state and community; parliament rushed through emergency powers to break the strike and there was no opposition from the so-called left.

The Labour governments of this period did nothing if not extending the role of the state into almost every aspect of life. A number of state agencies were set up to assist the monopolisation of capital and restrict the resistance of the working class.

Report No. 49 of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (NBPI), on the Engineering Industry, is an example of the use of a state agency as an attempt to try and iron out some contradictions within capitalist industry to make the insatiable urge to maximise profits at least appear real. In report No. 49 the NBPI attack what it calls wages drift - the ability to progressively increase earnings - and suggests methods to combat it. The move from 'piece work' to 'day work' in the Motor Industry is an example of this. The Labour governments have continually attacked wages. Workers were told to 'moderate' demands because of the balance of payments problem and when they rightly took no notice were confronted with the 3½% norm and eventually the wage freeze.

The Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (Donovan Commission), set up by the Labour Government, has been the basis upon which all attempts at using



the legal machine against the worker have been built. 'In Place of Strife' was produced and defeated because the Labour administration did not feel strong enough, at that time, to face up to the industrial strength of the workers as they would have surely had to do if they had not retreated. The pontificating of 'lefts' in Parliament had nothing to do with its defeat. The Industrial Relations Act 1971 was indeed conceived by the Labour Government (1966 - 70), proceeded through a gestation period of approximately two years, was born of the Tory government (1970 - ?) and is being weaned on the ineptitude of the TUC. This whole exercise is an attempt by the ruling class to resolve the 'irreconcilable antagonisms' that Engels spoke of; that become more and more irreconcilable the longer they exist. There are indeed many encouraging signs that the working class is much too sophisticated and experienced to allow its representatives (T.U. leaders) to become effective state policemen.

"This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the imminent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, ..... Along with the constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; ..."

(K. Marx, Capital Vol. 1, Ch. XXXII)

The Industrial Reorganisation Corporation had no other purpose than to assist the natural development of capitalism, the development towards complete monopolisation.

To do this it produced more and more capital intensive factories, or more correctly assisted corporations to produce them, encouraged monopolies to rationalise (sack workers) and reorganise into larger and 'more effective units' and in doing so ignored the effects upon the workers involved. There is contained within the whole concept of the I.R.C. a classic misuse of technology and its development; using it to maximise profits and not for the benefits of society as a whole. (For a development of this aspect see Marxists 16 & 17 - Aspects of Technological Change). The I.R.C. poured millions into most of the major corporations as well as being responsible for such job removers as U.C.S. Indeed many effects of such policies are only just being realised.

#### Labour 'Out'

Secondly, a look at the Labour Party not in government but as the 'opposition' party in Parliament or, as seen by James Connolly, not as Tweedledum but Tweedledee.

The Labour Party in 'opposition' has frequently been apologetic to the working class, apologies that have never been sincere but as I previously stated, for the purpose of gaining votes or popularity. We have only to witness the unprincipled grovelling of Wedgewood Benn on the U.C.S. debacle which he played, as a member of the government, a major part in creating. It is within U.C.S. (Upper Clyde Shipbuilders) that the role of one of the Labour Party's allies, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), is demonstrated but I will come to that later.

Unemployment; the registered number at the moment is approximately 1,000,000 and probably a further 300,000 unregistered,

and the responsibility of the Labour Government in contributing to these numbers is irrefutable. The general attacks upon the working class, the Redundancy Payments Act, the bedfellow of the I.R.C., either products of or results of the Labour Government beginning 1964, play a major part in producing this high level of unemployment.

Reginald Prentice, a figurehead in the last Labour Government, speaking on behalf of the party pleaded with workers to 'respect' the law and not openly defy it and that the next Labour Government could deal with any bad law. Wilson has subsequently reiterated this point and made it quite clear that no law, whatever it may be, should be disobeyed, and presumably the Jews were wrong to resist the laws of Hitler in the last war. They were, of course, speaking specifically to the dock workers of Hull, Liverpool and latterly London. The Labour Party has the audacity to call on workers not to protect themselves, but to rely on the very machine (Labour Party) that laid the basis for the current attack to provide the defence. This is the pattern of Labour in 'opposition'. Cause-confusion, do everything to encourage workers to forget their own (Labour) role in government, highlight the worst aspects of the Tory government, in the hope that similarities will be forgotten.

The leadership of the trade union movement is almost totally dedicated to social democracy, whether they carry the labels 'left' or 'right'. The Ford disputes, resulting in the nine week strike of 1971, clearly illustrates the social democratic role of such union 'lefts' as Hugh Scanlon (A.U.E.W.) and Jack Jones (T. & G.W.U.)

The complete role of both of them in reaching the agreement they did with Stanley Gillen (Director, Ford Europe) in by-passing the negotiating committee and agreeing upon the ballot which is an integral part of the current Industrial Relations Act, is nothing but a demonstration of their contempt for the working class. The T&GWU led by Jones was quick enough to seize the opportunity given them by the T.U.C. General Council to co-operate with the I.R.A. by doing as the Labour Party said and obeying the law. They paid the fines imposed upon them and openly instructed their members not to break the law and obey the decisions of the National Industrial Relations Court (N.I.R.C.).

#### Custodian of British Imperialism

The Labour Party, over the years, has consistently displayed the same international military role as that of the Tories. It is a role built on the foundations of British Imperialism; the subjection and exploitation of a quarter of the world's workers and resources to and for the interests of British Capital. It was a Labour Government that organised the killing of Malaysian workers and peasants; it was a Labour Government that organised the killing and torture of Adenese freedom fighters and it was a Labour Government that sent troops into Northern Ireland to retain that colony by force but under the pretext of preventing one group of Irishmen from killing another. Who killed the thirteen in Derry? The Social Democratic and Labour Party (S.D.L.P.), based in Northern Ireland and with very close relationships with the Labour Party, has constantly manoeuvred to prevent a confrontation with the state by the Irish workers. The withdrawal from Stormont was no more

then a desecrate attempt to win the support of Republicans and divert attention from the real struggle taking place in the streets. Both the Labour Party and the SDLP have constantly denied the real truth on Ireland. Connolly made the position quite clear when in 1896 making the first public statement on behalf of the new Irish Socialist Republican Party he wrote:

"The struggle for Irish freedom has two aspects; it is national and it is social. The national ideal can never be realised until Ireland stands forth before the world as a nation, free and independent. It is social and economic because no matter what the form of government may be, as long as one class owns as private property the land and instruments of labour from which mankind derive their subsistence, that class will always have it in their power to plunder and enslave the remainder of their fellow creatures."

That was and is still true of all nations that are colonised and economically and politically subjected to the ruling class of another.

The CPGB, notwithstanding much of their rhetoric, are nothing if not aspiring social democrats. Effectively they support the Labour Party and SDLP on the Irish issue, arguing that troops must be maintained in Northern Ireland to protect the Catholic workers from the Protestant backlash.

That infamous publication, "The British Road to Socialism", the 'programme' of the CPGB, makes quite clear that one of their principle aims is to be the principle ally of the 'left wing of the Labour Party'. The whole attitude towards the Labour Party is that if only we could destroy the 'right wing', it would become an instrument of

change. Among others, Wilson and Castle were one leading 'lefts' of the Labour Party.

James Klugmann (Editor of Marxism Today) makes clear the social-democracy of the CPGB when he wrote:-

"Parliament is not a piece of the state like MI5 or the armed forces or the police. These latter organisations are structured to serve capitalism, their leading personnel are carefully selected for the purpose ..."

(Morning Star 18.12.70)

One has only to ask who used the army in Ireland, the police against the coalminers and to suggest that leading personnel are not carefully selected to serve capitalism is a denial of the role of the state. It is a cretinous attempt to lend credence to the spurious argument that revolutionary change is possible through Parliament. The CPGB maintains that the Parliamentary road is the one to follow.

It is quite clear, even after this brief look at the practical aspects of social democracy, that it is not remotely allied to revolutionary change. The record of the Labour Party in government is clearly exposed as one of the managers of the capitalist state. The record when not in government is no better than when in; towards the working class, as demonstrated, the position has been one of insincere apologies, subservience and a complete dishonesty towards the problems of the working classes. Social democracy uses the trade union movement to support it financially and as a platform for its leading exponents to divert the struggle of the working class.

## COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN

### A BOOK REVIEW

by Frank Muscroft

The above is a title of a book published by the Technical and Supervisory section of the A.U.E.W. (until recently D.A.T.A.) and intended for free distribution to its members.

There are two reasons why this event is worthy of note.

Firstly it is an invigorating and all too rare experience to find a trade union using its funds in an attempt to focus the attention of its members upon the self-destructive nature of capitalist society. Despite the fine phrases in their slogans, most trade union leaders show the same reluctance to "over-educate" the workers as do the employers.

And the record shows that, whatever grandiose claims may be made in their initiatory addresses, they have consistently exhibited a strong distaste for any action that might upset the present system of society.

The second reason for noting the publication of the book is its content. The author Michael Cooley, is eminently qualified for the task that this book sets out to achieve, both by reason of his involvement in industry and the work that he has undertaken as an official of his union in investigating the effects of technological change on the workers in industry.

A great deal is written and spoken about

the technological age which seeks to portray Man's progress as a subject for mind-boggling wonder. The intention is to titillate the stupefaction cells and leave it there.

Here the author takes it a great deal further.

The first two thirds of the book are written primarily for design staffs, dealing with the application of computer based automation to design in the various fields of industry, e.g. Ship-building, Aircraft, Civil Engineering, etc.

But although the presentation is technical and at times demands an understanding of mathematics that this writer for one does not possess, the examples given provide a chilling indication of the inroads being made into what have previously been considered as "private preserves".

Having supplied the factual base, in the final third of the book the subject is developed in a dialectical way. This clearly shows how the development of the means of production (tools) has two aspects, the one that is negative and reduces the worker to a mere appendage of the machine.

The other aspect is positive in that the capital tied up in the machine increases along with the rate of obsolescence and as a result the worker's potential power, his capability to exert an influence upon his

in different ways.

It also brings home the realisation that the image of the computer as an inefficient and time-consuming lump of expensive iron-mongery is a gross and possibly encouraged distortion of the reality.

In science fiction terminology, it is as though our society was being invaded by extra terrestrial automatons "who", whilst maintaining the appearance of benevolent stupidity, were quietly insinuating themselves in the commanding heights of our way of life.

Conversely, and with equal emphasis but in a more "down to earth" way if you will pardon the expression, the author reminds us that the computer is the product of Man and that its use or abuse is a question for Man to decide. Whether it is to be used as a means of raising our existence to a level undreamed of or turning it into a living hell.

The first section of the book is a brief account of the development of the means of calculation used by men through the ages.

The second and largest section deals with computer-aided design and a few examples are quoted to demonstrate that, despite the technical nature of the subject, sufficient remains to illustrate clearly to most "lay" readers the speed and extent of recent advances.

Automated Drafting Equipment assists in the task of preparing detailed drawings, parts lists, the specification of Manufacturing techniques, methods, planning and production engineering. It consists of several components which may be combined and used

in different ways. For example, the A.D.E. Reader:-

"The drawing reader consists of the following:-

- (1) A draughting board with diffraction grating measuring scales on x and y axes, a graticule probe and a sliding control panel.
- (2) An electronic logic cabinet with controls carrying numerical indicators displaying the x and y axes of the graticule, the record number and miscellaneous switches and selectors.
- (3) A free standing A.S.R. teletype."

With this equipment detailed drawings can be produced from the lay-out drawing. For example:-

"When the graticule probe has been pointed at any of these geometric elements, whether it be a point, a line or a circle, the appropriate switch on the sliding panel is pressed and the definition corresponding to that element is simultaneously typed and punched on an eight channel paper tape for subsequent transfer of this information to the computer. It is possible, in addition, to digitize curves not mathematically defined, such as free form curves, with an appropriate series of probings ..... All intersections of elements or points of tangency are calculated by A.D.E. software, relieving the draughtsman of these routine calculations ..... All machining instructions, including the tools to be used and the cutting speeds, may be typed in on the keyboard. The A.D.E. reader is therefore an interface between design and production. The tape from the Reader is

then fed into the A.D.E. software which is essentially a set of programmes that will produce a machining tape for numerically controlled machines or a tape which will drive the A.D.E. microplotter."

The latter tape, used in conjunction with the microplotter, the Master plotter and the computer, can be used to produce detailed drawings, graphs and all types of listed data, printed circuit masters or sensitized film and high quality illustrations from numerical control information.

When allied to numerically (tape) controlled machines the circle is complete.

"A number of points should be made in respect of the equipment described alone. Firstly, it means that the draughtsman working in a drawing office actually undertakes the machine setting function. It will be evident ..... that the most highly skilled job on the shop floor, that of jig boring setting, is replaced by the preparation of the tape in the drawing office. Secondly, another highly skilled function on the shop floor, that of inspection, can be de-skilled when that task is undertaken by a digital inspection machine. The consequences of this for our colleagues in the A.U.F.W. should not be underestimated .....

It also means for the draughtsman working the A.D.E. Reader that a whole series of functions are telescoped into one."

Conversely, by the use of a tele-type terminal in the tool room a tool-maker is given access to a computer and can prepare his own control tape. It is claimed that a

tool-maker can become proficient in the use of the terminal in a few days and if he does make a mistake the computer will pick it up for correction later.

This system has been developed for use with the Agicut spark erosion machine. This machine is tape controlled and can cut an intricate two-dimensional shape in any electrically conductive material of any hardness, to a tolerance of 0.0005", up to six inches square and two inches thick.

### Shipbuilding

"In Norway and Sweden a number of companies have evolved a system for use in shipbuilding known as the Viking system. Some years ago, in order to carry out hydrodynamic calculations, a computer was used to define the configuration of a hull mathematically. It was subsequently felt that, once this definition had been made, the information could then be used to help with the detailing of the parts to comprise the hull.

The first stage was to develop the actual hull surface, having defined its general shape mathematically. Once this was done it was felt that it would be possible to define the shape of the individual sheets. This has now been achieved and tapes are prepared which are used directly on N.C. Flame cutters to cut the sheets to the correct size.

The effect of this will be not only to eliminate an enormous amount of drawing office planning and lay-out time, including lofting but will also have a profound effect upon the work force in

the yard ... During a recent visit I was informed that the software for this kind of work will soon be offered to ship-builders in Britain."

So it proceeds through car body design, the mathematical tool, the computer in creative design, etc.; with a wealth of detail. And we should do well to remember that these are not gimmicks of some "Tomorrow's World" but the harsh reality of yesterday and today.

But it is the third and final section of the book that marks it out as something more than a competent account of recent technical advances in engineering design methods.

The subject is given an historical context. The development of tools and changing social systems are shown as a dialectical process.

"Technological development is a powerful force which has moulded the course of history from earliest times, not merely in the sense that it tends to raise the standard of living of all or sections of the community but also in a much more profound political sense in that technological change alters the whole character of society.

It was the invention of agriculture and a subsequent flow of inventions, such as metallurgy and the use of wheeled transport, which transformed the simple life of primitive communism into civilisation with its complexities and class divisions."

The discovery of iron, the provision and growing use of metal tools in agriculture

and by craftsmen and the consequent increase in productivity brought about the situation where ...

"the advance in technology from the ... production of bronze to that of iron tended to break down barriers between classes, which had brought about stagnation in the Bronze Age.

It can therefore be demonstrated that from earliest times technological change has had a profound effect upon the structure of society. The more democratic Iron Age societies created circumstances in which technological advance could be made. This progress was, however, limited by the fact that although slavery created the conditions for the accumulation of wealth into fewer hands and therefore laid the basis for the further development of productive forces, yet in its decline it was responsible for holding back full development of techniques such as animal power and the water wheel.

Thus, technological advance necessitated a social change in which the slave states had to be replaced by medieval feudalism. This structure of society provided a higher status for the master craftsman and thereby stimulated a wealth of innovation including the first development of power driven machinery. By the Middle Ages the scale and nature of machinery had become too large for the social organisation which created it. Thus the master craftsman and their powerful guilds which had introduced the machinery therefore became an impediment to further progress.

The further development of the

productive forces could only be brought by the newly arising capitalist class. Capitalism then provided the social organisation which made possible the accumulation of capital, the social organisation for using heavy machinery and the development of the economic framework within which it could be effectively deployed."

Today, as machines become ever more complex, the capital needed to buy them increases astronomically. At the same time, the increasing rate of technical advance brings with it an increasing rate of obsolescence.

This means that the period over which the capital cost of the machine must be realised is correspondingly reduced. The employer cannot afford to have such machines idle for sixteen hours out of every twenty-four. So the pressure of the production line, shift work, work measurement techniques, etc. are forced into the field of engineering design.

"This harsh reality is very different from that envisaged by some Utopian Socialists who used to write books about the problems of people spending their leisure time when the work was automated and computerised. It is also in glaring contrast with those predictions that high capital equipment in the technological areas would simply liberate people from routine tasks and free them to devote themselves more fully to creative activities.

In a profit orientated society automation and high capital equipment will only be introduced into narrow areas of the economy, these to be exploited to the maximum for twenty-four hours a day. The motive forces of capitalist

society will prevent the widespread introduction of this kind of equipment and, through its general use the introduction of a shorter working week, longer holidays and more leisure time. Indeed, the effect will be to create a frantic work tempo for some whilst creating a permanent pool of unemployed persons."

As machines become obsolete, so do men and their knowledge. "Refresher" courses are not new, but it is the speed with which hard won knowledge is rendered "out-of-date" that is slightly alarming. The extent of this development may be gathered from a quote taken from the "Economist" dated 22 January 1972. In an article by Norman Macrae, the deputy Editor, the following statement occurs:

"The speed of technological advance has been so tremendous during the past decade that the useful life of the knowledge of many of those trained to use computers has been about three years."

As pressures mount, the obsolescence of the "man-component" becomes a very relevant issue and a great deal of research has been done to ascertain the "peak performance age". When the "man-component" is operating a costly and involved machine it is important profit-wise that he should be able to "keep up".

"In Standard Triumph in Coventry it is reckoned that a man is burned up in ten years on the main production line. Clearly the employer wishes those years to be as early as possible in order that the operator in question is active enough to exploit the plant at the highest rate possible."



Whilst the initial effects of this technical advance will be felt by draughtsmen and skilled men in tool rooms and model shops, it would be foolish to imagine that it will end there.

"The consequences for semi-skilled workers can be just as great. In those cases where there is still a high labour content in the production process, the tape can be used to control them. The effect in this situation is that the operator completely loses control over the tempo at which he works. The tape sets the tempo and the operator must either respond to it or stop the machine. In some systems every stoppage of the machine is recorded by a central computer. The operator is thereby ensnared in a system which increasingly subordinates him to the machine."

And after the "peak performance age" is passed? This is covered by the euphemistic phrase "careers de-escalation". The pedlars of capitalist society are never short of a flowery phrase to conceal the smell of a rotting corpse.

The concluding pages deal with the question of what is to be done and point to the positive aspects of technological change. For as the use of expensive and complicated machines grows, reducing the "man-component" to the level of his charge, equally does it present him with enormously increased potential to determine his destiny. A very effective example of this is given:

"In the past when a draughtsman went on strike he simply put down his 6d pencil and his rubber and there was unfortunately a considerable length of time before an effect was felt upon

production, even when the manual workers were blacking his drawings. With the new kind of equipment described, where numerically controlled types are being prepared or where high capital equipment is used for interactive work, the effects of a strike will be in many instances immediate and production will be affected in a very short length of time."

The employers are aware of this and seek to incorporate the more critical areas into the sphere of management, creating an elitist attitude that will help to dissuade those concerned from organising. Others they will persuade to join "fame" trade unions or anti-union collaborationist organisations and U.K.A.<sup>3</sup>.E. is mentioned as an example of the latter.

Although this section deals specifically with the question from the viewpoint of I.A.S.S. (D.A.T.A.), the principles apply to all workers regardless of "status" they may think they enjoy and which, if it ever existed, is being rapidly eroded, as this book shows. For as the means of production become more complex, so are skills fragmented.

Comprehensive ability is more rarely required. For example, toolmakers find that they are increasingly engaged on one particular operation, be it turning, milling, surface grinding, etc. The end result must be that comprehensive ability will become equally rare.

The vast sums of money needed for capital equipment has grown to the point where even the largest manufacturing concerns are forced to borrow huge sums from finance houses. Industry is increasingly controlled from banking and insurance houses, the accountant

reigns supreme over the engineer.

To ask the question, "Will computers take over from man", is to invest the machine with a power that it does not and cannot possess.

What is more important, it diverts attention from the man behind the machine.

Those who, like Enoch Powell, advocate a return to the days of competitive enterprise and initiative know well that this is impossible. But there is a choice as to which road we take and Michael Cooley makes his position quite clear.

"In capitalist society, science and technology, which could provide the basis for a fuller and more dignified form of existence, is being retarded. Further, because of the enormous contradictions within capitalist society, technology is heightening those contradictions to levels where a change in society becomes even more imperative.

Capitalist society is now incapable of providing the rational framework in which to organise the productive forces in social production ... The contradictions which arise cannot be resolved within the framework of a free enterprise system since they are but manifestations of the irreconcilable contradictions between the interests of the exploiter and the exploited.

Trade unions, however militant, can at best only protect their members from the worst excesses of technological change in this form. Only a political solution can harness these new forces in the interests of the majority of the population."

To work in order to bring about that change at the earliest possible date, or to passively submit to the increasingly rapid drive into state capitalism with all that could imply.

That is our choice and we must be equally clear.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to an administrative error, the article appearing in the current issue of 'The Marxist' (No. 19) entitled 'Africa: The Dialogue' was mistakenly attributed to Moeletsi Mbeki. The article was actually written by N. Reynolds. The editors wish to apologise to Mr. Mbeki and Mr. Reynolds who have both drawn our attention to the mistake. We publish below an explanatory note from Moeletsi Mbeki.

The Editors

"This article was given to me by Mr. Reynolds so that I could comment on it and return it to 'The Marxist', which I did. I must point out that I took no part in writing it. While I found the historical and economic study interesting, I pointed out to Mr. Reynolds that his criticism of African countries was unbalanced. The contribution of both Tanzania and Zambia to the Southern African freedom movements is enormous. This is evidenced by the brutal bombings of villages in both Zambia and Tanzania."

## LETTERS

WOMEN'S LIB. by P. Wagland

The question of "Women's Liberation" is constantly being distorted. At present it consists of mainly young middle-class women who have had an excellent education and are frustrated because they are unable to make full use of it. Being articulate, they are exerting pressure in all sorts of directions to take some of the burdens off their shoulders which are imposed on all women in this society.

And yet these women have far more freedom in their lives than their working-class counterparts. In a lot of cases their children are at boarding school, they own their own homes, have a 'daily' woman or an au pair in to do the heavy work, have holidays abroad several times a year, own a car and telephone, etc.

With all the nurseries, laundries, canteens in the world, working-class women would only exchange one lot of tedious work inside the house for another, outside the house, at a factory bench or in a shop. The only advantage for working class women of going out to work, apart from the obvious economic one, is that they are with a group of people and not isolated in the solitude of an empty house.

For an employer, of course, it is absolutely essential to perpetuate the myth that women are inferior to men so that he can keep the rates for women at a minimum. His arguments for a lower rate are generally that women are not the main breadwinners in

a family, that women are apt to leave the job when the children are sick or on holiday, or if she is expecting a baby, or that she will only work until she marries. Anything, in fact, except that he can exploit women to a greater degree than men and therefore make a greater profit out of them.

Some men see working women as a threat to their livelihood, especially at a time like this when unemployment is around the million mark. Naturally a boss is going to take on the cheapest labour he can.

Young mothers with very small children particularly experience the loneliness of being in the same place all the time for work and leisure. They work within the same four walls all day, all evening and all week-end, the only contact with the outside world being when they go out shopping for about an hour each day. Domestic work goes on seven days a week and doesn't end at 5.30 p.m. This isolation for long periods can sap their confidence in themselves.

Children are conceived by both parents and both parents should share in the upbringing of children but the extra work involved falls heavily on the woman, especially when the man has to work long hours of overtime. If he wants to go out by himself it is generally accepted by his wife but if she should wish to go out by herself in the evening it is tantamount to disloyalty.

When I see women struggling along the

road with heavy shopping bags I am reminded of beasts of burden. How many men help their wives' with the washing up instead of regarding it as a job to be done? How many men give their wives housekeeping money in the same spirit that a boss pays an employee? There are still wives who don't know how much their husband earns and have the humiliating task of asking for more housekeeping money when price rises compel them to. Surely any incoming monies should be shared by both husband and wife or at least mutually discussed as to how best to allocate it. Money troubles are one of the major upheavals in a marriage. Marxists should apply their Marxism inside the home as well as outside it. When a man is on strike this lack of knowledge as to how much he earns is one of the things the ruling class counts on as a weapon to divide husband and wife.

And so the barriers between men and women are built up to a point where they become alienated from each other. Is it any wonder that what could have been happy marriages with both man and woman having an equal attitude to each other and sharing everything in their lives, turn into sour relationships. The wonder is that most men and women do rise above these oppressions imposed on them by this society and "make a go of it".

There are women (and men as well) who do enjoy domestic work and looking after children and the community has need of these people. In a changed society where life isn't confined to the four walls of a house and the material possessions therein, the many talents and abilities of both men and women which at the moment are suppressed because of their circumstances, will be released.

The plight of the unmarried mother in today's society is still very hard. The double standard still applies between men and women. For a woman to have had a child outside of marriage is still regarded as a bit of a crime, for a man to have fathered a child brands him only as a rake. Landlords and employers take advantage of the unmarried mother's plight to the full.

What a massive commercial empire would collapse if people stopped regarding women as sexual objects. The mass media exploits women to the utmost. They are treated as commodities to be bought and they are then used to sell any product imaginable. Young girls and women, attracted by big money, are provided by their exploiters to whoever can afford their prices, as they would provide a car, a television set or a meal. The worst offenders are the ruling class with their hypocritically righteous public face and their decadent private morals. Older women are regarded merely as servants.

Women themselves have done a lot to perpetuate this attitude, fearing that to fight for equality would mean losing their femininity. Some men think that women want to become the 'superior' sex and unconsciously resent women who don't accept the status quo.

If the working class is to be really strong and united to change this society they must not let themselves be divided into 'men' and 'women' by the ruling class. Women are different from men but equal.

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Will you assist by sending in names and addresses of people interested in seeing a specimen copy of THE MARXIST

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## REPLY TO CORRESPONDENCE

In issue No. 19 of The Marxist we published a letter from C.K. Maisels in which he criticized the journal, comparing unfavourably its present standards with those set by its predecessors.

That the journal has changed is as undeniable as it has been intentional. What we challenge is whether his concept of the Marxist and its role is correct and whether the present product is as bad as he asserts.

Overall the letter suffers from a lack of substance and it may be that the somewhat excessive self-confidence that he expresses throughout is intended to compensate for this failing.

The first paragraph contains what could be described as a good example of cause and effect. We read that the Marxist started out "hopefully recognising that the principal task for the creation of a genuine Marxist-Leninist party in Britain was the broadening and deepening of theory." The author then proceeds to a quote from Engels in which he refers to "the indifference to all theory" exhibited by the English working class movement.

For far too long those sections of the left-wing scene with the training, time and facility to study and absorb the Marxist philosophy of life have exhibited little aptitude for applying it to concrete circumstances themselves, neither have they shown any marked capability for passing their knowledge on to those in a position

to do so.

Instead they have been - and are - content to devote their time and energy to the "broadening and deepening" of theory, seeing this as an end in itself. Their practice is limited to the constant forming, dissolving, merging and splintering of "political" groups that incessantly engage one with another, in a barrage of criticism and counter-criticism.

Periodically they refer to the "classic economic disease" of the British working class, regarding the struggle of workers for better wages and conditions as a distraction. To the workers they are irrelevances, hence the indifference.

The second paragraph contains an example of what can occur when quotes are used on the basis that if one of the "masters" uttered it, it is quite good enough for us. On this occasion Engels is quoted referring to "the fact that, at the present moment, no real labour movement in the continental meaning of the word, exists here."

That was his assessment of Britain written in 1878. Now, nearly a century later, we may be permitted to ask to where has that difference led, rather than repeating it parrot fashion.

It is essential that we should recognise differences where they exist, equally that we should take note of deficiencies when they develop but it could be fatal to assume

that eliminating one would resolve the other.

If there are those among our readers who feel that we are being a little hard on our **student and intellectual** friends, the third paragraph should dispel those thoughts.

"As we know", states Maisels, confidently, "the Marxist was to serve as a common platform where Marxist-Leninist theory would be developed through debate between Marxist-Leninists."

It must be appreciated that this concept of the development of theory through discussion has advantages for its disciples. The scope for debate is endless, the purification process stretches farther than the eye can see and the knobby problem of making it work can be put off until the theory is sufficiently broad and deep.

However, whilst it would be possible to continue, paragraph by paragraph, line by line, taking the letter apart, the temptation has to be resisted for that is not the main task. To state that the Marxist has no intention of limiting its function to that of providing a forum for sterile debate is to dispose of the negative.

It is necessary to expound the positive!

To recognise the need for a Marxist-Leninist party is to state the obvious. There are those who, perhaps in desperation, have rushed in to proclaim themselves as the party in question. The constant shuffling and re-shuffling of the self-appointed general staff at H.Q. is no doubt of great interest to those involved and, furthermore it provides a welcome alternative to the task of doing something positive.

But if we are serious and the party we aim to build is to be equal to the tasks demanded of it then we cannot continue in the way that has led to so many failures in Britain and elsewhere.

It means that a real attempt must be made to develop the forces that will ensure that this party will not become yet another political peacock. It also means that there must be a serious and sustained attempt to analyse the class situation in Britain today. To state that there are simply the haves and the have-nots is to evade the issue.

Meanwhile the economic struggle of the workers in defence of their living standards will continue regardless of the strictures from the political puritans.

Conversely, the deepening crisis of capitalism will necessitate the adoption of ever more restrictive and repressive measures in the attempt to contain that struggle.

As a consequence there will be a growing need and a growing opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of Marxist-Leninist theory, not only as a guide to action and as a means of providing perspective to the day-to-day struggle but as a philosophy of life that has immediate practical application to every aspect of our daily existence.

This we see as the primary task in Britain today and it is here that the Marxist must endeavour to make its contribution.

Do we see this as being in contradiction to the broadening and deepening of theory?

The answer must be No, that, in fact, this is the only way of developing theory.

not through academic debate but in the application of theory that has its origins in practice, leading to further practice and a raising of our level of understanding.

To quote - if we dare - Mao is most explicit on the subject in "On Practice":

"The dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge places practice in the primary position, holding that human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice and repudiating all the erroneous theories which deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice. Thus Lenin said, 'Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality.'

The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature; it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality; it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice.

The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings but by objective results in social practice. Only social practice can be the criterion of truth. The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge."

The major problem we have to deal with is reaching and raising a response from those industrial workers who are searching, and

who are being forced to search, for something beyond the next wage claim. For it is here that we must concentrate our endeavours. Not because we consider that they are the elite but because it is from here that the forces we seek must arise. Not to the exclusion of all else but if theory is to be tested in social practice, where else?

There is certainly no self-satisfaction so far as those involved in the production of this journal are concerned, we are far too conscious of its deficiencies and defects.

Criticisms, suggestions, questions, articles, opinions, all are welcome, particularly from those said to be afflicted with the "economic disease" of the working class in Britain. Only in this way can we work to define the correct path. Only in this way can we test the practicality of the theory.

Comrade Maisels also makes certain assumptions that are not borne out by the facts. The most important of these is that the base on which The Marxist rests is declining. In fact its base and support amongst the industrial workers is on the increase. The money for the printing equipment which we now possess was raised entirely from our supporters in the factories at shop floor level. In terms of existing conditions in Britain this was no mean achievement.

Contributions in the form of articles and letters from industrial workers are much more difficult to obtain, not only because of lack of training but also due to a lack of confidence from which most manual workers suffer when faced with literary problems.

This problem will not be overcome by articles in The Marxist on the subject of literary criticism but only by encouraging people with a practical experience of

## SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

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struggle to write down their ideas.

We have also made a start at taping conversations and discussions with workers so that we can help them to summarise their experience and so contribute their ideas towards the writing of particular articles.

The literary standards may not be as high as some of those who have had the benefit of extended "book" education but technique can be improved in the course of the practice of writing.

With regard to the yardstick by which we judge articles as suitable or unsuitable for publication, we have always maintained, whatever our other failings, that the Thought of Mao Tsetung is the highest development of Marxism to date and have refused to publish any material which seeks to denigrate the great contribution which Mao has made to the development of Marxist theory.

This is not to say that we intend to take a slavish attitude towards developments in China. We made the mistake during our membership of the C.P.G.B. of allowing ourselves to become in practice a mere adjunct of the Soviet State and Party. We are all too aware of the detrimental effect which this had on the whole course of development, not only in the Soviet Union but in all of the capitalist countries.

Uncritical acceptance of a particular line is unMarxist because it does not pay proper regard to the existence of class struggle within the leading Party.

We do not intend to make this same mistake again but neither do we intend to allow The Marxist to become the repository of all "Marxist" trends irrespective of their attitude towards the Thought of Mao.

To claim that a Labour Government and the Labour Party are quite different, that the former is 'right' and the latter 'left' is opportunist and a contradiction of all our experience. If the two are really so different, and that is only based on the claims of the CPGB and its 'left' allies, it would seem incredible to me to also claim that they are also both 'parts' of the same Party. In short, the argument of the two different Labour parties is no more than another attempt to deceive workers.

The monopolists have no illusions about the Labour Party and social democracy as a whole, indeed it will continue to serve the ruling class even within fascism. Social Democracy without working class theory, without the understanding of the class war and without the will to develop, as Marx said:

"Theory becomes a material force as soon as it is gripped by the masses."

It is a Party with a social theory based on scientific socialism that has the responsibility of leading the working classes, in leading the material development, accelerating the understanding of the theory of Marxism-Leninism and raising the contradictions within society to their highest level that is serving the interests of the working classes. It is not the responsibility of such a party to directly seek the destruction of social democrats, although that may be the subjective desire, for as a movement committed to the capitalist state it will perish with that state when the working classes rise up, seize the state and destroy it.

It is the responsibility of Marxist-Leninists to work to build a party capable of leading the working classes to the destruction of the present capitalist state and the building of Socialism.