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HYDE PARK SOCIALIST

WINTER 1972-73

QUARTERLY 3p

HYDE PARK SOCIALISTS

Our red platform in Hyde Park has not been in evidence very much of late: nevertheless this platform - the written word - still exists for socialists and anarchists who wish to make use of it. Obviously there will be differences of opinion and policy amongst our writers as much as amongst our readers, but we all possess one thing in common - opposition to the organisation of capitalist society. There are many parties and groups of people who have quite definite plans for overthrowing this society, but our platform is not prejudiced to present one more than another, and we do not seek to replace those parties already existing.

Some critics aver that we do not have a clear set of principles or a party line: if they don't like our open-endedness let them join IMG, SLL, IS, ILP or SPGB, and they'll soon discover for themselves some of the shortcomings of rigid policy decisions in building a revolutionary situation, which must of necessity include many more people than a small sect, if it is to be a libertarian and socialist revolution.

Most people are bred within a severely constricting religious, political or philosophical dogma. Our task is not to replace this with another set of dogmatic ideas, but to encourage people to think for themselves, freely, and within the context of maintaining a comfortable life for all men. This requires co-operative gestures.

Our platform in Hyde Park is still available for open air discussion along these lines, and anyone who can risk the buffoonery which sometimes overtakes a speaker in this 'University of Eccentrics' is invited to join with us !

THE PAST THREE MONTHS Through Socialist Eyes

Irish politics continue to make us want to both laugh and cry at the same time. The sheer absurdity of these Christians slaughtering each other in the time honoured manner is beyond anything we mere socialists will ever understand. Behind all the blarney and emotion is the simple fact that the country should never have been partitioned, and the Protestants and Catholics should abandon their separate political and social organisations. The English and Irish Governments are hand in glove with their respective churches, so no sanity can be expected from those quarters - governments thrive on superstition. We stand by what we have said before - the Northern Ireland Protestants are the chief cause of the trouble, but a Catholic united Ireland would be no better, as the police state measures introduced by Jack Lynch show. McStiofan, or any martyr, will not bring a spirit of hope and co-operation; the result of his policies can only lead to a replacement of one form of tyranny by another. The only solution, and it looks as if even Heath and Whitelaw are blundering towards it, would be a united non-sectarian Ireland, with international guarantees, with possibly some form of compromise or regional government with very loose connection with Britain for the north. However it looks as if hate and fear will continue to dominate the scene for some years yet, even if full scale civil war can be averted, which is still doubtful at the time of writing.

(continued overleaf on page 2)

Britain's entry into the Common Market is imminent - We welcome readers from the wider community - though it hasn't needed Britain to join this capitalist club for us to find readers within the EEC. As socialists we are in favour of unity amongst peoples of all nations and indeed abolition of the nation-state concept altogether. But the Common Market, as we've said before, is not for the common man. Its for the industrial bosses, who already exploit us, and joining the Common Market will only make their job easier. In Britain the worker can expect, despite the temporary freeze on some prices at the moment, an increase in the prices of many essentials, such as food. Opposition to the Common Market cannot come from the political parties, they only differ over details on the terms of entry, we must oppose it with common-minded socialists and anarchists in other European countries, if there is to be hope of success.

The struggle between Jew and Arab continues to be a situation where neither sanity nor expediency raise their heads. Israel's militarists and Zionists, war crazed and hungry for more territory do not help matters, and the flood of dollars from America and immigrants from Russia do not help Arabs to sleep easily at night. The activities of the Arab terrorists however cannot be praised either, and although the hijacking may provide us with some amusement, the death of the Jewish athletes and others is not something which we can condone in any shape or form. Letter bombs too are making postal services even more difficult for the underpaid and overworked postmen, especially at this time of year when the crunching of turkey, imbibing of wine, and general filling of the gut; takes place all in memory of that 'Prince of Peace' Christ who was supposed to have come from those parts, but has done nothing except leave in his wake terror and destruction ever since. World problems will never cease until all men vow as we have done never to worship any god or take up any arms again.

Non-conformity is very much out of place today: everywhere we see the signs of uniformity being imposed on a reluctant population. And it is the duty of those who make laws, and see that their order is imposed, to deal with those who won't fit into their scheme of things. Aberration described as 'anti-social', such as the recently publicised baby-and-pram-snatchings and 'muggings', should not be the subject of criminal proceedings, but rather investigation into the motivation for such acts. What drives some individuals into such frustrating situations? The family unit, so eulogised in capitalist ideology, can take a large share of the blame for this sort of 'anti-social' action. If the socialist ideal of commune living were adopted this sort of situation would stand far smaller a chance of arising. Yet non-conformity is so widely persecuted, that all must accept social norms or fall by the wayside, and a few may eventually rub the Law up the wrong way in a manner likely to call the wrath and rage of newspaper publicity, and its readers, down on their heads. We say this is sufficient reason, within the inevitability of the present establishment, to see it removed.

"Time was when Hyde Park was free to all who cared to speak, sing, dance, juggle, conjure, recite, sell pills, give racing tips, solve world problems, or build Utopias while you waited. Collections could be taken without let or hindrance. Up to 1872 the place must have been a speakers' paradise. Those days are gone."

Bonar Thompson in, 'Hyde Park Orator'.

WILLIAM MORRIS AND HYDE PARK by Leslie Jones

In the summer of 1884 William Morris was speaking regularly in Hyde Park, Regents Park, and Victoria Park in the East End together with H.M. Hyndman, John Burns, Tom Mann, Jack Williams, and others. He was one of a small knot of socialists who spoke at the great Franchise meeting in Hyde Park, on July 21st 1884. They provided themselves with a little cart with a red flag, from which they distributed their manifesto and tried to sell their newspaper. Little success was made in trying to convert the enthusiasm of the occasion to their own use. J.W. Mackail in The Life of William Morris, Vol. 1 & 2 published by Longmans, Green & Co. 1889, notes that "In the main they were unnoticed and swallowed up in the vast crowd". Morris wrote next day, "We found it easy work getting rid of the gratis literature but hard to sell anything".

The attempts at speaking from the mound of the reservoir in the Park were little more successful. A contemptuous reference by one of the speakers (John Burns) to John Bright raised a storm of hooting in the audience; the crowd began to push and sway, and the ring of friends round the banner was broken up and dispersed. There was no actual violence, a suggestion that the unpopular speaker should be put in the Serpentine was not taken up: but the day was over as far as any attempt to influence the crowd was concerned. On Saturday June 12th 1886 William Morris spoke at Hyde Park near the Marble Arch. Writing to his daughter Jenny on June 15th. he said "I was quite nervous about it, I don't know why: because when I was speaking at Stratford I was not nervous at all, though I expected the police to attack us. At Hyde Park we had a very quiet and rather good audience and sold 4 quires of Commonweal: and I spoke twice, the second time not at all nervously".

On Sunday morning July 18th. 1886, in accordance with advertised arrangement, William Morris was addressing an outdoor meeting in Bell Street off the Edgware Road. An Inspector of Police appeared on the scene, the crowd groaned, but made way for him. He came up 'mighty civil' and told Morris to stop speaking: Morris refused, his name and address were taken, and he went away again. Morris was summoned two days afterward at the Marylebone Police Court: the technical offence of obstructing the highway was of course indisputable, and he was fined a shilling and costs. This was his last encounter with authority in the cause of freedom of speech.

In October 1887 Morris's interlude 'The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened' was produced at the Farringdon Road office of the Socialist League for the benefit of The Commonweal. It was performed there on October 15th. Morris himself performed in it, and it was so successful it was repeated three times. Shaw says that he had never been present at such an overwhelmingly successful first night. The scene is a 'Court of Justice', and the case is heard by Mr. Justice Nupkins. Morris himself took the part of the Archbishop of Canterbury, called as a witness for the defence in a police prosecution of a member of the Socialist League on a charge of obstruction and riot. The Archbishop had gone for himself to see what a socialist meeting was really like. But he was disappointed by "the extreme paucity of the audience" and disgusted by "the rude and coarse words of the prisoner", who had complained that it was "damned hard lines to have to speak to a lamp-post, a kid, and an old buffer", by the latter vulgarity indicating myself as I understand. Philip Henderson in William Morris: His Life, Work & Friends, published by Thames and Hudson in 1967, says "Morris drew upon his own experiences of open-air meetings and attendances at police courts". The trial of the comrade is interrupted by the singing of the 'Marseillaise' and the outbreak of the revolution offstage. The play ends at Kelmscott in the world of News from Nowhere a socialist commonwealth and Nupkins, in a world without lawyers, is condemned to dig potatoes as a temporary penance.

I think you ought to have published more of the other side on Harry Pollitt than just the editorial disclaimer (see HYDE PARK SOCIALIST, Autumn 1972). Pollitt was not just a Leninist but a Stalinist, he became the leader of the Communist Party the year Trotsky was sent into exile, the year that the Third Period began. In the wartime years when Pollitt like the rest of us had to travel "in overcrowded trains" (as he was sending his son to Eton he probably travelled first class anyway) he was supporting the Government and was probably paid for speaking; he was calling for banning all strikes - with the death penalty for strikers - and for production speed-ups with no increase of pay, that was the time the CP produced Clear Out Hitler's Agents, a vicious smear on Trotskyists, by which term of course the CP included the ILP, Common Wealth, the anarchists, the SPGB, the SLP and a variety of smaller factions.

That is further back than my memory goes clearly and I have only read the record. But I can remember the immediate post-war years. I can remember the expulsion of Heffer's lot in 1946 for premature cold-war Stalinism; I can remember the CP policy when it finally changed from servility to the West to cold-war, the attempts to justify every crime of Stalinism - Labour Camps the lot. I can remember when the party led by Pollitt in 1957 produced a policy statement calling the Labour Party to allow the CP to affiliate and promising that if this happened the CP would be able to bring into the labour movement the British Legion and ex-servicemen's organizations and they would fight for socialism! I can remember the CP saying, "We will impose peace, if necessary by war"; I can remember in 1956 & 57 CP speakers at nuclear bomber bases trying to use colour prejudice as a weapon against the American presence; I can remember the CP - still nominally under Pollitt's leadership - denouncing the early CND as posing "Maximalist and Trotskyist slogans in order to split the broad unity of the peace movement".

Incidentally no mention is made of how the CP had to stand on its head at the beginning of the war, and Pollitt's temporary exclusion from party leadership; why shouldn't he be remembered for his mistakes - alright he may have been a socialist in extreme youth, but for the greater part of his life he was a hatchet man for a semi-fascist regime which was not just later loosely called Stalinist but was so known by every honest socialist of the time. He knew that Len Wincott, a militant trade unionist who visited Russia, was sent to a Labour Camp but made no protest. At the time of the Hungarian Rising - as Peter Fryer told at the time - one British CP member who had gone to help the Communists' regime radio service had served several years in a Stalinist concentration camp with no protest from the CP. Charlie Lahr used to have pictures printed of the CP red flag and the Union Jack floating entwined in amity, with planes flying by and patriotic messages from the CP.

Pollitt was able to stand on his head when he became leader, moving from the call for a united front to calling the social democrats - including left Labourists like Maxton - social fascists; he later stood on his head again calling for a popular front, not merely with those 'social fascist' social democrats but also with Liberals and liberal-Conservatives (of whom Eden and Churchill were supposedly examples, since the demand was for a 'Popular Front behind Eden and Churchill'), then back again on his head as the Stalin-Hitler Pact came, then the war was "a war against fascism", "an imperialist war", and "a war against fascism" again. According to Pollitt, in 1929-33 Maxton was a "social-fascist reformist agent of the capitalists", in 1933-38 Maxton was a "Trotskyist-fascist splitter, impeding the popular front against fascism and therefore objectively an agent of Hitler" (in some versions a "paid agent of Hitler"), from 1938 until the war Maxton was a "good internationalist" as he was again after the first week of war until Hitler's invasion of Russia, though for a few

HARRY POLLITT RECALLED - AGAIN ! (continued from page 4)

days in between he was a "Trotsky-fascist" again as he was to become again once Russia was in the war. Was it Maxton who changed or Pollitt, and which was the socialist ?

His reign in England coincided at its beginning with the 'Nationalist Government' chase in Bavaria, when the CP and the Nazi Party agreed to have joint reciprocal membership; and soon thereafter he saw Brandler and Thalheimer driven out of the CP leadership for opposing the Red-Brown Referendum when in Russia the CP and the Nazis made a united front against the social democrats. He was a leading member of the International when Willi Muenzenberg, who led the underground resistance to Hitler, was purged and betrayed deliberately to the Gestapo, when the exiled central committee of the German Communist Party was handed back by Stalin to Hitler and certain death. He was in touch with Spain where the CP made pacts with the fascists during the height of the Civil War so as to attack the CNT and POUM. He was ... but the list could go on for hours.

Why does this man deserve to be remembered as a socialist rather than as a Stalinist hack? If he - because in his youth he was a socialist - deserves to have his faults forgotten, should one similarly forget those of Mussolini (whose period as a real socialist was longer and more noteworthy) also be forgiven his mistakes and only remembered for his socialism? And, why oh why, should an honest socialist paper like the HYDE PARK SOCIALIST publish this without a comment? It is one thing to say of a Lenin or a Trotsky that they were "remarkable men with fire in their bellies" unfortunately handicapped by devotion to "party bureaucracies" so that they made mistakes; but it is quite a different thing to apply that sort of formulation - which by its inadequacies amounts to praising with faint damns - to renegades like Stalin, Mussolini and their like. Fair enough you don't want censorship, no one suggests you should have refused to print (though the time must come that you choose between two articles and therefore the editorial function to some extent involves choice and this will inevitably amount to censorship). But presumably if someone had written a similarly one-sided article about Mussolini you would have had a far stronger disclaimer. By selective quotation of the facts one could certainly paint Oswald Mosley just as favourably as Evans paints Pollitt - and with just as much justice !

EDITOR'S COMMENT: If Laurens Otter had recalled a little farther back, he would have realized that we have always objected to Stalinism, and more precisely many of the points he raises were emphasised by Frank Ridley in his article The British Left & World War II in HYDE PARK SOCIALIST No. 11, Spring 1971 - still available from the address on back page. While agreeing with what Otter says let's be fair to the CP of today. Many members admit that the purges of the '30s were terrible and at least the British Party opposed by a majority of 2:1 the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Also, the CP contains many industrial militants and others, who, despite their party's past do a bloody sight more for socialism and radicalism than most.

"There was little love lost between (editor) Bill Rust And Harry Pollitt, the Party's General Secretary - so much so that Pollitt hardly set foot inside the Daily Worker building for years at a time" - from Douglas Hyde's I Believed

A LOOK AT OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST
TO SOCIALISTS

WORKERS' NEWS SPECIAL : This new little paper is a rank and file practically oriented effort put out by a group of members from the print union NATSOPA. As such, it contains a lot of news about the industrial struggles within that union, and the conflicts between the socialist militants and the bureaucrats in the union hierarchy. The first issue also prints a "Draft Manifesto for a Workers' Party": since there are already a good many parties to which workers may belong, one can only view this conception as a further splintering of the all too few opponents of the capitalist system. More encouraging is the community news: the linking together of people in communities with common interests in opposition to councils and governments is the most hopeful sign for the future. In publishing this, this paper is doing a service by communicating the news between various groups.

Price 3p, from TUDG c/o '83 Gregory Crescent, S.E.9 5RZ.

REDDER TAPE : Civil servants will be familiar with the monthly journal 'RED TAPE' which is quite lively (considering the readership) monthly journal for civil servants' union affairs and items of general interest to everyone working for the Crown, and passing memos to & fro, in the numerous government offices up and down the country. Redder Tape has come on the scene as a radical counterpart. 2000 copies are being distributed in the first issue which contains an interesting article on the work of Telecommunications workers in the Post Office, which although now a public corporation is similar to the Civil Service. The Civil and Public Services Assodation (CPSA) has become a fairly militant white collar union in recent years and Redder Tape represents a militant section within it. Altogether a welcome accompaniment to the tea trolley !

Quarterly, price 3p, from 9 Manor Road, London E.10.

SOCIALIST CURRENT : This is a well established journal of Marxist Labour opinion. We agree with their opposition to capitalism and more importantly that they are involved in the bread and butter issues of the class struggle. Unfortunately they find it possible to work within the Labour Party against the Tories. How any socialist can still labour under the illusion that the Labour Party is any less capitalistic than the Tories in its policies we find it hard to imagine. Although Socialist Current criticises the Labour Party it can still see reason for working alongside it! The Labour Party is a rotten capitalist party, and this cannot be ignored - Socialist Current should be encouraging Labour Party members out of their party into separate local community struggles. Unless they do away with the idea of reform from within and replace it with workers' control independent of government and party, they will not be helping to build a socialist alternative, however excellent their criticisms of capitalism may be - and they're often good !

Bi-monthly, price 3p, from 142 Clements Road, London E.6.

WARNING: It seems that the independence and right to publish small minority political journals such as this may be threatened if the activities of certain publishers called 'Harvesters Press' of Brighton, are anything to go by. They made the princely offer of 2½% on the proceeds of sales of micro-filmed copies of HYDE PARK SOCIALIST, which they proposed to publish. Legal copyrights were to rest with them. Motives behind the venture may be suspect. They could be acting as cheap information gatherers by police and other authorities who may wish to clobber opposition groups at a moments notice. At best they hope cash in on left wingers' hard work. Exploitation par excellence !

Two Poems from Bob Power

when i am painting
it becomes
quite clear
that really
i'm a great poet

when i write poetry
i know
that
i'm really
cut out to be
a painter

maybe i'll become
an engine driver

when i grow up.

ah - condensation
i said
as i tried to peer
through the window
at the fields
and trees
this morning

no !
said the horrified
nerve endings
in my fingers
as i tried to clean the glass
ice - they said.

PUSSY CAT, PUSSY CAT

Hugh Scanlon, Hugh Scanlon, where have you been ?
I've been to London to visit the Queen.
Hugh Scanlon, Hugh Scanlon, what did you there ?
Had a cup of royal tea, and a laugh with Prince Philip
All at the workers' expense, up there.

Jack Jones, Jack Jones, where have you been ?
I've been to London to visit the Queen.
Jack Jones, Jack Jones, what did you there ?
I too had some tea, for being so loyal
Up there.

John Worker, John Worker, where have you been ?
I've been to London to visit the Queen.
John Worker, John Worker, what did you there ?
Got chucked out neck and crop
And kicked in the belly, and
- up there !

HYDE PARK SOCIALIST is still available by post for 22 pence per annum, thanks to Ted's freeze, from the address on back page.

FREEZE THE POLITICIANS NOT THE WORKERS by Bill Hughes.

The rich people who run this country get richer with inflation, rising prices are good for the stock market, profits soar and interest rates rise. There is only one snag with this capitalist bonanza the businessmen have been enjoying since the end of the war - the people who actually produce the wealth - the workers - can only stand so much. Wages must rise if the share of the national 'cake' is to be increased for those who actually make it. That is why it is a criminal act - theft of the worst kind for the Conservative Government to impose a wages freeze at this moment for 3 months, probably to be extended for 5 months. The Conservatives are following in the steps of daylight robbery set by the previous traitors of the working class, the Wilson Government of 1964 - 70.

The conflict between workers and employers is permanent and impossible to settle. No amount of talk, conferences, committees, White Papers, draft resolutions, statements of Intent and what have you will cure the dreaded disease of capitalism. The TUC, CBI and the Government can talk until they are blue in the face, nobody can conceal the stark reality that one set of people are rich and powerful, and the rest of us are only able to exist by selling ourselves body and soul on the 'labour market' to serve our time until the great day we can retire & eke out the rest of our days on the miserable old age pensions or forced to go begging and crawling to the SS office. As libertarian socialists we condemn this system of servitude in which the State is playing a bigger and bigger part in dominating our lives. This is clear in the way all governments, whether supposedly 'left' or avowedly 'right', seek to bring in the unions, employers and government in one big deal to crush once and for all any form of shop-floor or independent action by workers themselves in deciding their own conditions and pay. Mussolini and Hitler did exactly the same thing in successfully crushing the left and workers movements in Europe in the '20s and '30s, their heirs have learnt the lesson well.

The only self-respecting course to follow is to ignore the shameful propaganda poured out against the workers of this country by all the big Tv networks, newspapers and radio and work out ourselves what wages and conditions we want and ignore completely all the phoney exhortations by governments and union leaderships for 'restraint' and 'moderation'. There is plenty in the kitty and more still if we were to seize control of industry and communities ourselves and give those parasites who run things at the moment the boot. When genuine workers control is put into practice the wealth will not just be used to beget even more wealth and the accumulation of even more useless clutter and pollution, but would be put to use to improve the lives of the entire population, something that the profit system can never do. Edward Heath promised to reduce prices at a stroke; the result, the most crippling price increases in food this country has ever known, with guarantees that they will rise even higher with entry into that potential fascist club - the Common Market. Stopping inflation is like trying to prevent Princess Anne speeding - unenforceable. If the government do really try to clamp down then a huge black market will operate in which the rich will still be able to buy what they want while the rest of us make do on ration books as in the war.

The capitalists are on the defensive, our aim now must be to hot up the class war wherever we can, actively support and encourage strikes and other forms of self-determination by workers and show the government, union bureaucrats and political parties where the real power lies - in the hands of the producers, the workers themselves.