

BOOK REVIEW

THE TRADE UNION—L.P. ALLIANCE

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR PARTY SINCE 1945
by Martin Harrison, Allen and Unwin, 32s.

LAUNCHED in the middle of the season for trade union conferences which extends from Easter to August, this is a timely and important book. It provides the reader with all the background information to appreciate the significance of the current newspaper headlines—'Y Union backs Hughie', 'Z Union says Ban the Bomb', etc. But it is more than this: it is a substantial, well-written, scholarly contribution to the understanding of contemporary British politics. If, in line with the present fashion of historical and political scholarship, it seems in places overly Namier-like in its concern for the minutiae of politics at the expense of ideas, this is no great fault. We have had a surfeit of books on kindred subjects written from the point of view of 'Labour's glorious path to power'. We can do without such banal ideas if in return we get, as we do here, a cool appraisal of the facts.

For facts is what this subject has hitherto lacked. With the major topics discussed by Harrison—the unions' political levy, their financing of the Labour Party, the sponsored Parliamentary seats, the block vote at annual conferences—we are, of course, all familiar. But around each of these, liberally watered by interested factions on all sides, has sprouted a luxuriant growth of myth. Using in the best academic tradition the weedkiller labelled "dispassionate sifting of the evidence", Harrison has succeeded in clearing the ground.

As a result, we now have, for example, an accurate assessment of the effect of the repeal in 1946 of the Trades Disputes Act of 1927. That Act, passed on the morrow of the General Strike, substituted 'contracting in' for 'contracting out' in paying the political levy. According to Conservative critics, the reversion to 'contracting out' in 1946 resulted in 3 million unionists paying the levy against their will, since the official statistics show that the proportion of contributors sub-

scribing to union political funds rose from 48% in 1945 to 90% in 1947. Harrison reveals that the official statistics are inaccurate and that the true increase was from 48% to 76%. More important, he says bluntly that what was involved in this issue was not principle but material interest. The real question was which party, Labour or Conservative, should have the benefit of intimidation, ignorance, inefficiency and, above all, the sheer inertia and apathy of millions of card-carrying trade unionists.

Again, we now have as near accurate a picture as we are likely to get of the extent of the Labour Party's dependency on trade union money bags. At the present time, the aggregate political funds of trade unions amount to some three-quarters of a million per year. A large part of this—in the form of affiliation fees at the national, regional and local levels, donations to the Development Fund, assistance to sponsored candidates and subscriptions to election appeals—finds its way directly into the Labour Party's coffers. In the last general election, 96% of the Party's Election Appeal Fund was subscribed by the trade unions. Seven pounds in every ten that the Labour Party receives centrally, and at least two in every three it receives regionally, come from the unions. Of the Party's income as a whole, it is impossible to give exact figures but, for 1957, Harrison calculates that the unions together accounted for £370,000 or 50 to 55% of the total. In return for this, as a result of the unusual system of affiliation, the unions control eight out of every ten votes at the Party's Annual Conference.

The preponderance of union voting power at the Conference is responsible for the chronic sense of frustration experienced by militants in the local Labour parties. Typically, the bulk of speeches from the floor of the Conference are 'left-wing' and critical of the platform, due in large part to the fact that the unions, unlike the local parties, never send their full quota of delegates and union speeches take up a mere 15% of the time compared with 34% taken up by constituency party speeches.

Union reticence, however, extends only to the speechifying, not to the decision-making. When the time for voting comes, the single hand of a Deakin or a Cousins holds up a card which may cancel out the aggregate votes of all the constituency parties. This fact has provided the basis for what Harrison calls 'the stereotyped image of the unions as a sort of orthodox lump of suet pudding clogging the Party's progress'. In fact, there has never been in the post-war years, not even during the 'Bevanite crisis' of 1951-55, a clear union-constituency division at the Conference. There has always been a minority of 'left-wing' unions in opposition to the platform and, similarly, at least a minority of constituency parties backing the Executive line. And 'at any given time two or three of the largest unions have been voting against important sections of official policy. The unions have never been as thoroughly unprogressive—nor the local parties so fanatically left-wing—as popular legend decreed'. On only two issues since 1945—German rearmament and SEATO—has a majority of the unions found itself opposed to a majority of the constituencies. In every case, except German rearmament, about 40% of the constituency votes have been cast for the platform. The complex truth in contrast to the simple distortion is that up to 1956 2.8 million union votes regularly supported the Executive, 1.8 million were solidly 'left-wing', and a further 1 million were unpredictable.

Since 1956, the blocks of left and right wing votes have been less cohesive. In part this has been due to Brother Arthur's replacement by Brother Frank as boss of the TGWU. The local party militants—and the leadership—now realize that monolithic union support for official policy is not an invariable law of Party life. But this has merely provided the basis for a new myth for the left-wingers to cherish. In place of the old image of four men in a smoke-filled room forming the sole barrier to the adoption of 'full-blooded socialism', we are now presented with a picture of a militant rank and file making or about to make a successful revolution. The first sketch of this picture was drawn by Bevan in commenting on his election as the Party Treasurer: 'I consider that, in some respects, the block vote has

adjusted itself to the point of view of the rank and file! It has apparently not occurred to our passionate 'left-wing' democrats that, if the accidental succession of Arthur by Frank makes all that difference, this only underlines the oligarchical character of the Labour leadership.

As Attlee once pointedly observed, 'Those who make the loudest song about the block vote are significantly silent when it happens to be cast with their own views'. The block vote, it should be noted, is not written into the Labour Party constitution: the unions could, if they wished, split their votes to give due weight to minority opinion within each union. Now that it is becoming evident that the block vote at the next Conference may well embarrass the leadership as it formerly oppressed the militants, we may witness the irony of the 'right-wingers' initiating moves to make the machinery more 'democratic'. On balance, however, this is unlikely: it is more probable that the leadership will, if necessary, disavow Conference decisions and take its stand on the 'autonomy' of the Parliamentary Labour Party as the most 'representative' of Labour's elected bodies. To upset the block vote would introduce into Labour Party decision-making an unpredictable factor and its abandonment would radically change the nature of the unions' alliance with the Party. Harrison is probably correct in thinking that the block vote is part of the price the Labour Party has to pay for union support. The alliance with the unions inevitably generates tension not confined to 'left-right' political issues but including also industrial and economic issues on which the unions insist on having the major say. Without the block vote, most unions would lose confidence in the Party.

Perhaps the most interesting and novel chapters of the book are those dealing

with policy-making within the unions and the politics of union branches. Harrison provides a useful analysis of the policy-making process in each of the 'big six' unions. It is not the whole truth that the political line of the unions is determined by their executives or general secretaries. In part this over-simplification is a product of the publicists' tendency to personalize politics, to see the battle as Nye versus Hughie, Frankie versus Arthur. The spectacle of Williamson last year calling a special conference of the NUGMW to reverse the surprise vote in favour of unilateral disarmament may be misleading. The unions over the years do follow a fairly predictable course, left, centre or right, and the 1959 vote of the NUGMW was out of character. 'It was the sort of "accident" on which many union decisions turn: a vote by 150 votes to 126, with 75 delegates either sunning themselves, drinking tea, or on their way home (according to who was making the excuses) and the Executive so sure of victory that it failed to put up its biggest guns'.

Union policy-making is not democratic and it does not result in policies which truly reflect the views of the bulk of trade unionists. But 'left-wingers' have to be careful in using this as a premise for their arguments. One-quarter to one-fifth of trade unionists vote Conservative or Liberal and many of those who do so have not bothered to 'contract out' of the political levy. But the voice of this substantial minority is not heard at union conferences, not even at those of the NUGMW. Apathy is perhaps the biggest single obstacle to getting a democratic and representative policy in the unions. But, as Harrison reminds us, it is not the only obstacle. There are institutional limitations preventing unions forming policies democratically, such as the frequency of conferences, the tight time-table, and crowded agendas in

which political resolutions are frequently placed at the tail-end.

Harrison stresses the difficulty of realizing the ideal of forming policy right up from the grass roots in a truly 'representative' fashion. 'Such are these (institutional) limitations that union decisions are not surprisingly unrepresentative from time to time, even without any improper intervention by the leadership'. His general conclusion on this topic is: 'The link between the ordinary member and the votes cast in his name at the Party conference is so tenuous and complicated that critics outside the Party might fairly conclude that it is little more than good fortune if trade union leaders speak for the majority of their members. But the critics within the Party reckon to believe in the possibility of making representative decisions—and they would hesitate to dismiss their friends in the same condemnation as their enemies. All too often they have preferred to dismiss the decisions with which they agree and accept without question one which favours them. Among this confusion only one test seems helpful. Imperfect though they are, the decisions of trade union conferences, like those of any freely-elected body of representatives, must be taken as expressing the views of the membership until the contrary is shown. . . . Within the existing structure of trade unionism it is hard to see how the membership could be brought into any more true participation in the decisions made at the Party Conference, or how "representation" could be made more real.'

This conclusion, however, is far too timorous. The choice is not between perfect representation and the present highly imperfect situation. There is no doubt that even 'within the existing structure' union policy making could be made more representative. The main reason why no steps are taken or are likely to be taken to make it so is that the activists, both official and rebel, have

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THEATRE

The Caretaker

HAROLD PINTER is one of the young Anglo-Jewish dramatists who look as if they might take over the part once played in English literature by Anglo-Irish ones like Wilde, Sygne, Ervine, O'Casey and Shaw. It is true that the peaks of talent recalled by these great names rather overshadow people like Pinter and the others—Arnold Wesker, Peter Shaffer, Bernard Kops, Wolf Mankowitz and so on—but then the surrounding countryside is a lot flatter too. At least the promise shown in the very different plays these young Jews have produced in the last few years makes them interesting. Social and psychological realism, poetic and folk drama—these have been tried by the other four. Pinter does not fall into any of the categories, or indeed any at all; he is more unpredictable, intriguing and perhaps more promising than any of his contemporaries. He has written half-a-dozen plays in the last three years, the most recent one being *The Caretaker*, which was finished last Christmas.

The Caretaker, which was transferred to the Duchess Theatre and published (Encore 5s.) after playing at the Arts Theatre Club for a month, is perhaps Pinter's "easiest" play, in the sense that his audience is now at least as much stimulated as baffled. His other full-length play, *The Birthday Party* (also published by Encore), in which an Irishman and a Jew come to a dingy boarding-house to "get" the only lodger, was really so baffling that enjoyment was difficult; though *A Night Out* (recently broadcast on radio and television) was more straightforward.

The superficial events of *The Caretaker* are readily comprehensible. A nasty old Welsh tramp (Donald Pleasence) is rescued from a café brawl and brought to the only inhabited, junk-filled room in a dilapidated house somewhere in West London by a slow taciturn man (Peter Woodthorpe), who spends the rest of the play popping out from time to time and returning with more junk; his brother (Alan Bates), who owns the house and has a building business, is a quick, lively Cockney much given to practical jokes. These are the only characters. They are not meant to be nor do they really seem extraordinary. They are, like neurotics, the same as ordinary people, only more so. They recall a sentence of Ford Madox Ford—"We are all so afraid, we are all so alone, we all so need from the outside the assurance of our own worthiness to exist". This assurance is never given.

The action of the play—such as it is—concerns the degrees of acceptance and then of rejection the tramp gets from the two brothers, at first individually and in the end together. In the beginning he is protected by the quiet one and tormented by the quick one; later he feels left out by his protector and turns to his tormentor; finally he tries to play them off against each other, but they are brothers and separately reject him. It is their offers (also made separately) to have him as caretaker in the house (where there is nothing to take care of) that give the play its name.

But of course the play is more than a comedy of misunderstanding. Each character in it has a vision, as we all do. The tramp wants a good pair of shoes and a break in the bad weather so that he can walk to Sidcup (on the other side of London—of the world?), where his "papers" are, and "get sorted out"; the quick brother wants to redecorate the house and furnish it in the poshest contemporary style of "gracious living" that we see in the advertisements; and the quiet brother also wants to redecorate the house (though more because he likes collecting junk and "working with his hands than because he cares what it will look like), but wants to build a shed in the garden first. Inevitably, none of these visions will ever be realised, any more than most of ours ever are. They are obsessive fantasies, and the pseudo-conversations in which they are formulated and the half-hearted attempts that are made to realise them are no more than compulsions.

Unfortunately, Pinter's characters are not the only people who suffer from obsessive-compulsive neurosis. The preoccupation of the critics with labels and their habit of fitting everything they see into categories have tended to obscure the qualities of *The Caretaker*, though the brilliant acting and production have done something to save it. Just as any play dealing at all seriously with contemporary problems is called "angry", or any play dealing realistically with the seamy side of life is called "kitchen-sink" or "dust-bin", so any play whose dialogue is clever and whose meaning is not readily available is at once assumed to have been written by a servile disciple of Beckett and Ionesco (who are lumped together to make things easier); and this is what too may have done with *The Caretaker*.

In fact Pinter is not a rhinoceros and,

like most good dramatists, writes plays that are like nothing except themselves. If comparisons must be drawn, his technique has something in common with John Mortimer and Giles Cooper and his preoccupations resemble those of Chekhov and Kafka. (The visions of his creatures fulfil the function of Moscow in *Three Sisters*, and the fear and solitude that oppress them once oppressed K.)

On the subject of technique, it is possible perhaps to find one defect in *The Caretaker*. This is that, having rejected the last trace of romanticism, Pinter likes to rely on comedy for relief. There is nothing wrong with this, except that English audiences in particular tend to assume that if something gives them a few laughs it can't be serious; and if *The Caretaker* is anything it is serious—there is a tremendous kick behind the laughter, for those with the sensitivity to feel it.

Altogether I think this is one of the best plays I have ever seen. Apart from being written, produced and acted to perfection, it has several of the qualities of great drama. You are never bored, but always wonder what will happen next; the dialogue never jars and the action never embarrasses; you have known the people all your life; you go on thinking about it when you have come out of the theatre—about such exchanges as these:

"I noticed the curtains pulled down there next door as we came along."

"They're neighbours."

" . . . You can get down to Sidcup."

"You build your shed first!"

Above all, when you read the text you can hear and see the three superb actors who bring it to life on the stage—especially the unbelievable performance of Donald Pleasence, who is so real that you can almost smell him.

Do go to this play, and watch out for Pinter's next one.

N.W.

Please help us
to find those

New Readers
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Reflections on The Age of Success Stories

Continued from p. 1

about family background, youth, hobbies and the like. Interesting as the John Freeman interview with Sir Roy Welensky was, it failed at (least for the reader) because Freeman never challenged the outrageous things Welensky put forward as facts nor did he follow up answers by supplementary questions which would have obliged Welensky to bring out the racial discrimination in S. Rhodesia and the Federation for which he "as a man of destiny in Africa" shares a large part of the responsibility, for instance:

Freeman: Do you feel that today you are making reasonably good use of the reserves of African skill?

Welensky: We are making reasonably good use but we could make better use.

The obvious supplementary to that diplomatic answer was "Why aren't you making better use of African skilled labour?" But this would be putting the V.I.P. on the spot and this would be against the rules of the game and ensure that no high-ranking politician would appear on a live programme.

Earlier in the interview the implications of having a Jewish father were discussed. But instead of following this up with a few questions on his views about the racialism in Germany of which the Jews were the victims and the racialism in Africa for which he, a Jew, was responsible, the subject was dropped almost as soon as it had been raised. Again it was clear that there was no intention at any time to put the 20-stone Welensky in a position where he would feel uncomfortable or turn nasty in front of the millions of unseen eyes glued to their telly screens. Probably the general impression was that Welensky was after all one of the people. A self-made man (he left school at 14), an active Trade Unionist (whites only of course) in his time, and a dedicated administrator. Assuming that he succeeded in getting himself across (and there are professionals who are employed by politicians to teach them how this is done) then one can be sure that for most viewers his ideas on race relations in Central Africa were of no consequence.

AND this is the tragedy of our times. Ideas and success are two quite distinct things. Indeed the former may jeopardise the chances of achieving the latter. For instance, the troubles with the Labour movement in this country, writes Robert McKenzie in last Sunday's *Observer* is that it

resembles some primeval beast, huge and still immensely powerful, which has manifestly failed to come to terms with its changing environment. Since October the party has seemed to be engaged in a baffling exercise designed to demonstrate its own utter immutability and hence its incapacity to survive. After the bone-crushing quarrel over Clause 4, the party executive "reaffirmed" its belief in the common ownership of all the major economic processes in the country. It readopted this essentially Marxist definition of Socialism, despite the clearest evidence that it is anathema, both to the electorate as a whole and to the great mass of Labour voters.

Now the Robert McKenzie approach, like that of the Labour Party's hierarchy, is the success story: of winning elections at all costs, for the means is justified by the ends. Hence the need to hand over to the Public Relations boys who made such a good job of the last elections for the Tories and

Workers, Management and Professor Melman

SEYMOUR MELMAN, who is an Associate Professor of Industrial and Management Engineering at Columbia University, is a student of industrial productivity and mechanisation. It was he who wrote the recent report to the European Productivity Agency in Paris declaring that in the West there has been a failure in industrial organisation and a failure of technological efficiency in the machinery-producing industries. Another unpublished and reputedly highly critical report on the machine-tool industry in this country has been made by the Department for Scientific and Industrial Research. The reason for all this current concern about the failure of the machine-tool industry in the West to apply mass-production methods is obvious. As Melman says (*The Listener* 26/11/59) "The commercial victory of the Soviet machine-tool industry on the world market, including the penetration of Western markets, could measurably contribute to a world-wide economic and political victory for the Soviet system."

His interest in comparisons with Soviet industry has other aspects, however, besides that of Cold War economics. In an article in *Dissent* last summer discussing Joseph Berliner's "Management and Bureaucracy in the Russian Factory", he remarked that this study shows that the similarities between modes of management at the plant level under private (Western) and State (Russian) capitalism are at least as important as the differences:

"Berliner's analysis of Soviet management compels one to ask: Are there

could do the same for Labour. What is needed is a new 'Labour image'. As Mr. Crosland points out* Labour was largely associated with old issues

"notably more nationalisation, old attitudes of mind, old people . . . and above all a gradually declining class. Gallup polls show that far more people associate Labour with the working class than with any other attribute or issue; and the authors also suggest that the party's association with the trade unions may have been damaging in view of the latter's marked loss of popularity."

It seemed to us that the Labour Party had long ago jettisoned its socialist ideas in the quest for Power, but to hear that it has not jettisoned enough, and that when it does, it will get the votes, would indicate how well the personality cults and mass communicators have brain-washed the public at large.

The ease with which the Welenskys and the Kippings, the Montgomerys and Maos, the Eisenhowers, Trumans, Attlees, Macmillans *et al.*, can flaunt their success stories before our eyes without a whimper of protest, is not a sign of growing tolerance or equality in human relations, but of an indifference on an alarming scale. For too long we have left the thinking and the decision-taking in the hands of others who have invariably served their own interests. As Welensky put it in answer to a question about the advantages that would have accrued if when he was an active trade unionist they had concentrated on getting a rate for the job regardless of race rather than reserving the job for the whites.

Welensky: It is all very well to have hindsight now, but that was a long time ago and circumstances were very different. At that time it was not a problem; it just did not arise. The African did not worry about it, and was happy and satisfied with the existing state of affairs. That has all changed, and the world is a different one today.

How easy it is to assume that when people say nothing it means they are happy and satisfied! In a way the ruling classes cannot be blamed for taking this attitude. Why should they lose their privileges if no one challenges their right to them? It would seem that the "backward" Africans have understood this more clearly than their literate, TV cultured counterparts in the Western world!

*With reference to the findings of the recently published survey on "The British General Election of 1959" by D. E. Butler and Richard Rose.

alternatives to the managerial mode of decision-making over industrial production? Many people have held to the view that there is something in the very nature of production technology and the size of industrial plants which, both in the capitalist West and the Communist East, precludes democratic mass participation and requires a managerial hierarchical rule over industrial work. From the standpoint of everyone interest in a free society it is important to know whether the modes of management we have in both Russia and the United States are the consequence of particular social arrangements or are inherent in 'the nature of things'."

He went on to refer us to his book *Decision-Making and Productivity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, New York; John Wiley, 30s.) in which he has tried "to demonstrate that there are realistic alternatives to managerial rule over production."

Now here is a point of extreme interest for those concerned with propagating the theory of workers' control of industry. In his 1957 Anarchist Summer School lecture "Beyond the Wage System" (FREEDOM 17/8/57 to 31/8/57), Geoffrey Ostergaard, having described examples of co-operative co-partnership and co-ownership, signified his agreement with the view of the Labour Correspondent of *The Times* that "there is no evidence in the experience of this country that they provide any solution to the problem of establishing democracy in large-scale modern industry", but, as Ostergaard remarked, "the point at issue is not whether co-operative co-partnership in the form that we know it can hope to establish itself in large-scale industry but whether the principles of free co-operative work can be so applied and, if so, how?" He found the most hopeful proposals to apply these principles in the present context, to be that of the collective contract as envisaged by the guild socialists and put forward again by G. D. H. Cole in *The Case for Industrial Partnership*. Cole claimed that the collective contract would have the effect of "linking the members of the working group together in a common enterprise under their joint auspices and control, and emancipating them from an externally imposed discipline in respect of their method of getting the work done," and Ostergaard suggested that "such a system would effectively break down the hierarchical organisation of industry in which authority descends downwards from the Managing Director through lower management to the workers on the shop floor, and pave the way for its replacement by a system of mutually co-operating functional groups knit together by collective contracts," and he concluded that the managerial revolution "will be prevented, if at all, within industry by methods which wrest from the managers the sources of their power."

THIS is where Professor Melman comes in. Approaching the subject

from a quite different standpoint, that of production engineering, he reaches conclusions which both confirm, and set limits to, those of Cole and Ostergaard. In an earlier book *Dynamic Factors in Industrial Productivity*, comparing rises in productivity in different countries during the last 50 years, he had shown that the ratio of administrative to operative work-force in Britain has risen both faster and farther than in America, and had in fact outstripped the rise in productivity, and also had shown that the productivity differences that are traceable to different methods of production are far greater than the productivity differences caused by variation in the effort of production workers. The starting point of his earlier enquiry was the level of alternative labour-machine costs. The present book *Decision-Making and Productivity* is about the "decision-making process that generates the cost of labour relative to machinery". The value assumptions from which he approaches the subject are set out in his preface:

"Increased productivity is not, in my view, a meaningful end-in-itself. Productivity for human well-being is an inspiring goal. When applied toward these ends, the growth of productivity results in an abundance of consumer goods, the reduction of menial tasks in production, and more widely diffused leisure. In contrast with these ends-in-view, productivity for enslaving or war-making is a dismal prospect. In my estimate, there is a close connection between these alternative ends and the alternative ways that may be used for productivity growth. Some of the modes of decision-making that are discussed here are probably contradictory to authoritarian methods and goals. Therefore, this book may suggest the importance of sharpening our perception of the relation between decision-making means and productivity."

After this, the reader is a little surprised to learn that the book is an exhaustive study of the Standard Motor Company at Coventry in the period leading up to the important "automation" strike at their works in 1956. The way in which the same phenomena can appear in a quite different light to different observers can be seen when we compare what FREEDOM said about Standards (12/5/56):

"The Coventry strikers are standing out for a purely negative position—the right to be consulted when there is redundancy and to share their hardship between them. What we are waiting to see is their demand for the positive right to have a voice in the control of policy at all times."

and what Professor Melman says about the same firm:

"In this firm we will show that at the same time: thousands of workers operated virtually without supervision, as conventionally understood, and at high productivity; the highest wage in British industry was paid; high quality products were produced at acceptable prices in extensively mechanised plants; the management conducted its affairs at unusually low costs; also, organised workers had

a substantial role in production decision-making."

These two points of view—for the important thing about them is that both are valid—reflect opposing views on the scope and limits to what Melman would call "worker decision-making". His discussion of this aspect of the topic is peculiarly opaque, presumably through fear of libelling anyone. He describes the two points of view as "alternative policy lines: the policy of extension of mutual decision-making by workers on their occupations, and the essentially political policy of competition for the seats of managerial control." These policies, he says, "are contradictory and have been at the roots of major splits in worker organisations". And in discussing the "explosion in industrial relations which occurred in these plants during 1956" he says that "among the workers the development of a worker mutual decision system was paralleled and, in part, superseded by a policy line of competition for managerial control". And he explains:

"Among the workers and the active shop stewards at Standard there has been a considerable backing for an essentially political orientation that contrasts with the extension of a worker decision system. In this political view the workers can advance their material position in a serious way only if they support a political struggle to replace the managements of private business capitalism, with the managements of state capitalism. (By 'state capitalism' I mean nationalisation of industry, plus unilateral and authoritarian decision-making on production by state officials). Moreover, in the political struggle toward state capitalism the workers must, in this view, subordinate the requirements for coping with their proximate occupational problems to the tactical needs of political combat. This later feature is critical for it leads to the suppression of autonomous worker organisation."

He never makes it really clear whether he is referring to Communist or to Labour Party influences. (At the time of the slump in car production during the credit squeeze, several Labour M.P.s addressing meetings at Coventry demanded the nationalisation of the motor industry). The interesting thing is that he regards "competition for managerial control" as essentially in the interests of external political movements, and to the detriment of the workers themselves. Neither he, nor apparently the Standard workers ever appear to have thought in either guild socialist or syndicalist terms:

"At no time during many hours of conversation with workers at the Standard Company was there any usage among them of terms like 'worker decision system' or 'process' or the like. Neither did we find any evidence of a formal ideology of occupational behaviour. Thus at no time was any discussion heard about 'worker control'."

MELMAN sets out to test four hypotheses from his study of the Standard Motor Company, and he regards them as proved by the evidence his book provides. They are:

1. There are alternative possible ways for organising decision-making in production in large scale mechanical plants.
2. High levels and rapid growth in industrial productivity can be achieved when industrial workers as well as management do decision-making on production. This implies that unilateral decision making by hierarchical management groups is not a necessary condition for operation of industrial plants at high productivity levels.
3. Large and constantly expanding managerial groups are not essential for the operation of large-scale highly mechanised industrial plants.
4. Changes in the way of worker and management decision-making are explicable in terms of the interior mechanisms of particular decision systems, rather than as effects of the methods of production themselves.

These hypotheses, he declares "afford strong grounds for challenging a widely held assumption—that a thoroughly managerial society, with its attendant loss of personal and political freedom, is a necessary condition for rapid advance in industrial productivity."

For our purposes, I think, we can take for granted the technical qualities and competitiveness of Standard's products, and their superior pay rates compared with the other members of the "big five" in motor manufacturing, and discuss in next week's FREEDOM the actual extent of the "worker decision-making" which Melman describes, his demolition of the myths of management, and the evidence he provides to support our view that Standard's workers could organise their industry themselves. C.W.

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What are the Aims of Education

DEAR SIR,

I would like to suggest that before the school-leaving age is raised we consider what the aims of education are as I think that such consideration will cause us to reorganize the system. While still undergoing 'education' I graduated last year from an ancient university with a degree in one of the social sciences. I can only say that I am thoroughly dissatisfied. Let me go through my history to show why. It is worth bearing in mind that the process has taken almost a fifth of a century.

Before I was 15 what did I learn? The worthwhile things seem to have been: Firstly learning to read, write and do arithmetic. Secondly, learning something about such things as woodwork. Thirdly it is possible that my French may one day be useful. Fourthly I learned what caused the tides and how the land came to be what it is; so that I am not quite so given to superstition. On the other hand I was forced to drag my eyes over pages of dull classical literature, was expected to memorise the position and industries of various towns (this was at least interesting), and was indoctrinated with misplaced nationalistic feelings in some lessons going under the label of 'history'.

Then there were the years in the VIth form. Physics, Maths, and Chemistry; interesting for the most part if one had not to memorise the stuff for exams; but I cannot see them being of much use to me in the future.

And then university. The first year subjects—physics, maths, zoology, and geology earn the same comment as the VIth form subjects did; the only one I see any possibility of following up is the last—and even that only if I cease living a city life. Finally the honours course; again how much of it is going to be useful in my occupation? Being a social science it did at least bring me to consider my values and tell me how other people live their lives and what their satisfactions and dissatisfactions are.

How much of this drudgery was necessary and worthwhile?

It seems to me that there are two aims of education: 1. To provide the individual with information which will be useful in enabling him to enjoy his life and, 2. To provide him with the necessary knowledge and skills with which to do his job. Its main function should not be to gain social prestige. If this is true the present system fails miserably in its attempt to fulfil its function. Very little of the above learning falls under either heading—and what does did not take a fifth of a century

On Being Rational

DEAR COMRADES,

G.'s article on "Anarchism and the Flat Earth mentality" provided, for this reader, a great source of amusement and interest.

G. claims that Anarchism is a "rational body of social theory" and that "Anarchism is primarily a rationalist system". G., however, is not rational in his attack on the "pseudo"-sciences. What greater irrationality can there be than to pronounce judgment on topics not studied? The fact that Hitler used astrologers does not disprove astrology. C. G. Jung also "believed" in astrology. Spiritualism, Reichianism, phrenology, etc. are not disproven by calling them superstitions. Perhaps G. would do well to adopt this aphorism from Sir Francis Bacon: "Man as a minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observation on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more."

For Anarchism and scientific rationalism,
New York, June 5. A. H. BLACKWELL.

**MANY READERS
have still
NOT RENEWED
THEIR SUBS.**

**Please do so
THIS WEEK!**

to acquire. Furthermore, taken all in all I certainly have not enjoyed it.

It may be argued that any bit of what I did might have been useful had I followed up that line of study—but I have noticed that given the minimal level of ability necessary to study a subject it becomes interesting as one gets to know more about it. This seems to indicate that it would be much better to find by psychological testing (which admittedly is only in its infancy) that line of study which an individual would enjoy and would be good at, and to train him only in this with a view to his occupation. If the training required for any occupation was thus reduced to the minimum really necessary to cope with it, it would not be difficult to give up one line and re-train for another. The rest of the student's time could thus be spent much more profitably *a*. In learning how to solve problems (rather than routine methods of solving routine problems—such as the science student spends most of his time today doing) and *b*, learning things which would be useful in his everyday living—for example facts about how other people live, the values they have, and the satisfactions and dissatisfactions they have with their way of life—I strongly advocate the teaching of Social Anthropology in schools. Furthermore much more time could be spent developing interests in leisure pursuits—in which I include all pursuits that can be followed without expensive equipment—one can have a leisure interest in birds or rock sequences, but I doubt if many people would pursue histology or mineralogy as spare time interests. If the occupational-training aspect of education was limited as suggested above, more time could be devoted to hobbies such as photography, handicrafts, gardening, radio, etc., on the one hand and on the other an acquaintance with the value of written work and other cultural produces for *a*, gaining information, *b*, arousing one's several emotions, *c*, stimulating and developing thought. I do not suggest that these become *optional* subjects since interest can only develop once the basic groundwork has been covered. I have no objection if after this an individual still wishes to spend his life in front of the television, but at least he would be given the chance to develop other interests. Under the present system of education one has to specialize in a subject and then specialize within that subject before one can do anything; it seems to me that it would be better to miss out all the general material which one will most likely never use: it is someone else's province; one cannot keep up to date in two areas, therefore one cannot hope to contribute to the other area; why burden the student with it?

Students today (especially science and medical ones) are overworked and underpaid, the quantity of non-occupational-goal-directed work they have to do results in loss of whatever interest they once had in the subject. One is forced to the conclusion that far from wishing to educate the students for life or to give the minimal information necessary to do their job well the irrational primitive desire to punish the next generation is at the basis of our system. This seems even more likely when it is remembered that the exam system arose from the beatings students at Cambridge were given before they were allowed to take

That's Better!

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their place with their teachers. If it is argued that the system serves to separate the brighter from the duller I must point out that this can be done in a much more congenial way by psychologists.

What about the two traditional reasons given for education—'promotion of maturity' and 'development of critical thought'? I don't believe them. A young person who has left school is eminently more mature socially than considerably older people still undergoing education. As for the critical thought assertion most science students don't have a constructive thought until after they have got their Ph.D., as I said above they learn routine ways of solving routine problems—which is extremely useful. How little the transfer is from training in orderly thinking and method in one area to another is illustrated by looking at the statements natural scientists make about social phenomena, and by comparing social sciences to these other sciences!

In short I commend more education-to-enjoy-life and a narrower area but more intensive education-for-occupation. This could well be started without extending the period of education. I am afraid such a recommendation will meet with opposition for three reasons: 1. One of the 'functions' of education is to indoctrinate children in the dogmas of the society; not to lead them to question them. 2. Another function is to keep children dependent. 3. Children are being educated on the ratepayers' money; they should not like it.

JOHN RAVEN.

'O Brave New Left'

DEAR COMRADES,

I would like to know what evidence leads N.W. to agree with Kenneth Alexander's assertion that "working class values" imposed the welfare services "within and against capitalism" ('O Brave New Left'—FREEDOM, 4/6/60). It does not seem to me that these services constitute any serious threat to capitalism and this view appears to have been shared by some capitalist spokesmen who actually welcomed them as helping to stabilise capitalism.

When the basis of the present welfare system was first proposed in the Beveridge Report, Lord (then Sir William) Beveridge argued:

"It is to the interest of employers as such that the employees should have security, should be properly maintained during the inevitable intervals of unemployment or of sickness, should have the content which helps to make them efficient producers." (Page 109. My italics).

Again, on page 167, he wrote:

"For the employer the Plan imposes an addition to their costs for labour which should be well repaid by the greater efficiency and content which secure." (My italics).

He was supported by Sir Samuel Courtauld who thought that:

"... social security of this nature will be about the most profitable long-term investment the country could make. It will not undermine the morale of the nation's workers: it will lead ultimately to higher efficiency

among them and a lowering of production costs."

(Manchester Guardian 19/2/43.)

And in the debate on the Report in the House of Commons, Lord Hailsham (then Quintin Hogg) saw the Report as averting "social revolution" by giving "the people social reform".

Hailsham was no doubt exaggerating the possibility of revolution, but his statement, together with those of Beveridge and Courtauld, demonstrates that the measure of state collectivism contained in the subsequent National Insurance Acts was not regarded by these representatives of capitalism as being opposed to their interests.

Yours fraternally,

Bristol, June 8.

S. E. PARKER.

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS
"The Marquis of Granby" Public House,
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(corner Charing Cross Road and
Shaftesbury Avenue)
at 7.30 p.m.
ALL WELCOME

JUNE 19.—S. Fanaroff on
WHY I BELIEVE IN THE FLAT
EARTH THEORISTS

JUNE 26.—John Pilgrim on
CRIME AND THE FREE SOCIETY

London Anarchist Group

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Last Wednesday of each month at
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At Dorothy Barasi's,
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1st Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m.
At Colin Ward's,
33 Ellerby Street, Fulham, S.W.6.

2nd Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m.
(International Libertarian Group)
At David Bell's,
39 Bernard Street, W.C.1.
(Local Readers Welcome)

JAZZ GROUP

5 CALEDONIAN ROAD, N.1

(nr. King's Cross Station)

Friday, 17th June, 1960.

JACK STEVENSON

on

WILD BILL DAVISON.

**L.A.G. SUMMER SCHOOL
REMINDER**

Don't forget when arranging your holidays, that the Summer School will take place during August Bank Holiday weekend. It will be held at Alan Albon's Farm at Hailsham, Sussex (under canvas), and those who wish to will be able to stay for a week. Further details of cost, lectures, etc. will appear later.

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G.O.

The Trade Union—L.P. Alliance

Continued from p. 2

a vested interest in the present system. Harrison's critique elsewhere of the myths fostered by all sections of the Labour Movement should have been brought to bear on this point. Both the leaders and the oppositionists within any union, whether 'right-wing' or 'left-wing', prefer to operate, wherever possible, in the context of apathy and with the institutional limitations Harrison mentions: the leadership because the system usually works in their favour, the oppositionists because it provides them with the only possible chance of swinging the policy of the union. This is clearly the case where the opposition is 'left wing': more democracy, truer representation would, however much we may dislike it, completely scupper the prospects of achieving 'full-blooded socialism'. It cannot be too often hammered home: the present Conservative régime exists on the basis of six million working class votes.

For those capable of looking at the subject with detachment, the overwhelming impression an observer gets of the 'democratic process' in the Labour Movement at large is that of many little bands of activists, of various political hues, all engaged in the quest for large paper majorities. Every organisation in the Movement is formally democratic but oligarchy in the strict sense—the rule of the few—is the prevailing norm. This oligarchy is the result of various factors of which probably the most important is apathy. It is, to speak truly, downright dishonest if a Deakin or a Cousins claims to express the views of one million members of the T.G.W.U. Such a claim is a pure fiction—the kind of fiction at the heart of 'representative democracy'. It is equally dishonest if the constituency militants, thirsting for the 'rich red blood of socialism', claim to speak for the one million members of the constituency parties. As Harrison points out, 'Many local parties, led by semi-oligarchic cliques, have no better claim that their decisions are "representative" than some of the unions which they reproach for being out of touch with the people.' Harrison himself appears to accept minority rule as inevitable and provides an estimate of the size of this minority. 'The unions' critics have been slow to grasp that almost every decision a trade union makes, whatever its political hue, must be a minority decision. It will never be possible to interest the entire industrially active membership in the Labour Movement. Some members think that politics and trade unionism do not mix, others belong to anti-Labour parties, and others have no time to spare for the political side. If the number who join from time to time in industrial activities is rather under a million, as Roberts has suggested, it seems extremely unlikely that more than two-thirds are even

potentially likely to take part in political activities. Even so, it must be admitted that no union is at present attracting anywhere near the maximum political participation.'

Whether and how far minority rule is inevitable is debatable. But it would certainly be salutary if all those Labourites who prate about the need to 'accept the rule of the majority' would remember more often that what they really mean is 'accept the rule of the minority which happens to have won a paper majority'.

This book, as may be judged, is about the mechanics and process of internal Labour politics. Its object is strictly limited to this aspect of the Trade Union-Labour Party alliance: 'Our purpose is not to debate its wisdom but to explore it.' Anarchists, of course, will want to do more than this and to challenge the very basis of the alliance. Within his own terms of reference Harrison does in fact provide some material for such questionings. In a short but interesting chapter he examines the 'non-political' unions, 80 of which are affiliated to the TUC but not to the Labour Party. Such unions do not provide much comfort to the anarcho-syndicalist: 'nonpolitical' is merely another form of 'political'—inevitably so. Their importance, however, as Harrison suggests, lies in this: 'By showing that (the lessons of trade union experience) do not point irrevocably to affiliation with the Labour Party this group of unions is a standing challenge to one of the Movement's most cherished myths.'

The 60 years' old partnership between the major unions and the Labour Party is not likely to be challenged in any other way than this for a long time to come. The alliance could not break up without a major crisis in the Labour Party and a break would shatter the Party as an effective political force. A head-on collision between the unions and the Party cannot be ruled out as impossible but what is more probable is a gradual decomposition of the alliance. There are several signs to suggest that since the war the unions have been less willing than formerly to make sacrifices for political action and they are now powerful enough in their own right to stand up to any Government, with or without the help of the Labour Party. Harrison's final words sound a note of warning to our Labour politicians: 'Labour might be left with the worst of both worlds. On the one hand social change could make the Party's association with the unions a wasting electoral asset, and even an embarrassment. On the other hand, the unions' continued withdrawal from participation would leave the Movement like an ageing elm. Though outwardly it might be sound its heart would be dead.'