

The Importance of Class

T. Hill

A Labour Aristocracy ?

Brent Marxist Industrial Group

Book Review

100 Days War

Monthly Review (july-aug)

Why the Housing Bill ?

Communist Unity Organisation (Grimsby)

Pollution

J. Hill

Comment

Number Twenty-One
Price 10p

THE MARXIST

THE LIBERATION OF THE PROLETARIAT IS
THE TASK OF THE PROLETARIAT ITSELF.

A New Year's message from one of our readers which we gladly pass on

BEST WISHES for the NEW YEAR
in the same vein as earlier,
again very very sincere
in conditions further severe,
making for all very necessary
conscious efforts not to be accessory
to the forces of rising neo-fascism
serving sometimes monopoly capitalism
and at others the social revisionism,
thus all the time this or that imperialism;
necessitating checks also on diversions to left romanticism
harmfully contributing only to pseudo-revolutionary jingoism
or on the growing trends to mere radical liberalism
no way leading to real breaks from benevolent elitism;
with HOPES for early recognition
of essential need for involvement in mass action,
even to safeguard the rapidly eroding rights
of democracy and of freedom for fights,
individual and collective, against oppression and suppression,
as part of the common peoples struggles for freedom & liberation;
HAILING the revolution for the people
carried out themselves by the common people.

Please send -
Editorial correspondence to-
T.Hill 11 Barratt Avenue, London N.22 4.E.Z.

Subscriptions to-
S.Graves, 26 Merley Court, Church Lane London.,N.W.9

Please make cheques and Postal Orders payable to The Marxist.

Subscription rates (six issues)	British Isles	78p
	Overseas	surface mail 90p
		airmail 160p

COMMENT

The imposition of fines by the N.I.R.C. on the A.E.F. has brought into the open conflicts which were never far below the surface but which had been concealed behind what appeared to be a solid front of unanimous opposition to the Industrial Relations Act.

It is an excellent example of the dialectical process of one dividing into two.

Firstly the "unanimous" opposition to the Bill with demonstrations led by the I.U.C.; then, when it became law, the division between those who wanted to play the game of "finding loopholes in the law" and those who completely opposed Registration as required by the Act.

The expulsion from the I.U.C. of Unions which registered was correct as an attempt to stop the rot.

The most difficult battle is now on between those who advocate the complete ignoring of any machinery set up under the Act, and those who maintain that the unions should attend the N.I.R.C. for the purpose of defending themselves.

The very act of attending the court is to recognise its existence and its jurisdiction, there can be no doubt on that point, and those who advocate such a course of action are advocating retreat.

In particular, to argue that it would be correct to recognise the N.I.R.C. on this occasion because we appear to have a "stone

cert" is either blind stupidity or, more likely, blatant dishonesty.

The previous contradictions within the union leadership were important but more easily resolved than the present one because they did not involve any financial penalties, but this one cannot be baulked or papered over.

Either there must be sufficient mass opposition built up to make the N.I.R.C. back down on the imposition of fines on the Union or, failing this, such structural alterations in the Union's finances as to make it impossible for fines to be collected or property sequestered.

Mass opposition to the fines can only be built up on the basis of widespread awareness of the real and long term implications of this struggle, but this is being made difficult by two major factors.

The divisions within the leadership are making it impossible to issue a call for unified action of the character necessary to make any tangible impact on the Government.

Second, but more important, the mass of the rank and file are by no means aware of the implications of the struggle but this cannot be wondered at as long as the leaders of the "hard line" faction restrict their statements to questions of recognition or non-recognition of the N.I.R.C.

Whilst there is reaction to paying contri-

butions and then having them impounded by the government, there is also the long standing feeling that the funds in question are out of the control of the rank and file anyway and that even if they are kept by the union they do not benefit us.

In other words, there seems to be a widespread sentiment that the funds are theirs, not ours, so it is their (the leaders) battle, not ours.

It is all part of the still growing isolation of the leadership from the membership.

The Hard Liners

Unfortunately, even those who could be fairly described as being hard liners in their opposition to recognition of the National Industrial Relations Court in any form do not seem to have thought out their position any further than seeing a future of token stoppages every time the union is fined.

In a war of attrition of this character the employers are bound to win.

As a purely mathematical calculation it is true that the amount of production lost as a result of each stoppage far exceeds the amount of the fine, but in many instances the lost production and wages are made up by additional overtime. For instance, some workers in London Transport workshops were on strike on the Monday, but on the previous Sunday they worked overtime at overtime rates.

For many others, however, the money lost through stoppages cannot be made up in this way, and there are signs that some members are reacting against a continuation of

token stoppages, not solely because they are not clear on the issues involved, but partly because they cannot see the possibility of positive results flowing from such actions.

A much more attractive proposition to many rank and file members of the union would be the calling of an official strike with the stated intention of continuing it until union funds had been so depleted that the fines could not be collected.

It will no doubt be argued that this will weaken the Union; but is this so, is there any alternative?

The dilemma is obvious.

Capitulate, recognise the N.I.R.C. and be absorbed into the workings of the Industrial Relations Act; refuse to recognise its jurisdiction, and continue to pay fines and so deplete the union funds; or an all out drive to defeat this aspect of the Industrial Relations Act in which all the resources of the union will be fully committed.

As an alternative to recognition of the National Industrial Relations Court, the tactic of refusing to recognise its jurisdiction whilst continuing to pay the fines which it imposes is getting the worst out of both worlds. Union funds are being depleted and the membership growing more discontented with token stoppages.

Union Finances

Already, unions which are not Registered have now to pay large amounts to the government in the form of income tax. This coupled with demands for higher wages by the full

time officials and growing administrative costs will, apart from the additional burden imposed by fines, prove to be a load which a large section of the membership will be unable or unwilling to bear.

The last increase in contributions created discontent and the sharp deterioration in the arrears position shows that the membership are resisting paying these increases. Further increases in contributions may well bring about a reduction in the paid up membership which will counteract the stimated income from increased contributions.

In these circumstances, the present drift, (it cannot be called a policy), cannot continue.

The alternatives are -

Attendance at the N.I.R.C. with all that that implies, or

Full commitment of the union's resources to defeat this part of the Act.

The latter is infinitely preferable, but it is also unlikely; partly due to the divisions within the leadership already referred to, but also partly due to the fact that for most, if not all, of the leadership at all official levels, "defence of the trade unions" means attempting to retain the present structure.

It seems to us that the underlying weakness even amongst the hard liners, is the basic weakness of all social democrats, namely, a complete inability to understand that "free" trade unions of the kind to which we have been accustomed in Britain are a luxury that the big monopoly capitalists are no longer able to afford..

Of social democrats and class collaborationist leaders we have had our fill, but this has been in a situation in which they could thrive and be "freely" accepted by the membership.

Now that the employing class have less room for manoeuvre and these leaders are losing their ability to control the rank and file by the old methods, the trade unions as institutions are under pressure to "change with the times".

The aim of the ruling class, whether represented by the Tory or Labour Party, is to strengthen the centralist and bureaucratic tendencies within the unions so that the membership can be more effectively controlled.

They are aware that for the majority of trade union leaders the strength of the union lies in its financial assets. The leaders have invested large amounts of the members money in building offices and buying computers, the sole purpose being the servicing of the internal bureaucracy which has been created over the years.

To many within the Union it is difficult to envisage a union without this bureaucracy and wealth, but are they really necessary?

Many of us have been on strike at some time or other without receiving dispute benefit from the union, but we have managed.

A greater reliance on workers in other establishments would relieve us of the need to comply with the wishes of the Executive, but more importantly, would build up an awareness that it is people who matter, not institutions.

If we can break with the present concept_

ion of union structure to the extent that we concern ourselves with the needs of the situation rather than being limited by a desire to preserve outmoded structures, then we can, in the course of struggling against the employing class, view with enthusiasm the prospect of radical changes in the organisations we create for the carrying forward of the class struggle.

But In The Meantime?

The unions can still break out of the defensive positions into which they have allowed themselves to be forced, not only with regard to the Industrial Relations Act but in response to the general offensive on living standards.

The objective conditions exist for a counter offensive which could rally even more backward elements around a policy of defending living standards and showing in practice that the trade unions are worth defending.

However, it is extremely unlikely that this will take place, the real struggles in both these issues will have to be fought out as usual at shop floor level whilst at the same time using every opportunity to put pressure on the leadership to adopt policies of mass resistance.

It is necessary to make the point that this whole struggle will be a protracted one taking place within the framework of a struggle for class power.

Unless this standpoint is adopted the way will be left open for those who preach that the whole ruling class offensive can be defeated in one battle.

It also leaves the way open for those who

see the whole thing as a convenient and welcome way to bolster up the flagging support for the Labour Party.

There are two tendencies in this respect.

One which opposes industrial action for fear of frightening away electoral support, and the other which supports industrial action as a means of "bringing down the Tory government".

The first one is obvious and open parliamentarianism, the second one is disguised with a "militant" flavouring but its aim is the same, to divert the mass struggle and make it an appendage of the parliamentary game of "Ins and Cuts", and is accompanied by a "revolutionary" demand to replace the Tory Government with a "Labour Government committed to socialist policies".

In a country so immersed in Parliamentary politics as Britain, it is difficult to break away from the idea that one can only engage in practical politics by supporting this or that Party in elections in the hope that it will not be quite so bad as its predecessor.

What is needed is concentration on building up mass support for certain demands which will make it impossible for any government to carry out anti-working class policies without creating greater political instability as a consequence.

"MONTHLY REVIEW"
116 WEST 14TH STREET
NEW YORK
N.Y. 10011

SUBSCRIPTION RATES \$14 ONE YEAR

100 Days War

William Hinton

The delivery of the July-August issue of "Monthly Review" brought with it a pleasant surprise in this "nothing for something" society. For subscribers to that journal received a 288 page long book entitled "Hundred Day War" and at current subscription rates that is a bargain in any language.

It is an account of the Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University - of events at that University which began with the displaying of a large character poster at the adjacent Peking University on May 25th 1966 and reached the level of armed struggle until the arrival of several thousand workers and peasants brought about the cessation of hostilities and the beginning of the Big Alliance. But not before several students and workers had been killed and many more injured.

As the author, William Hinton, makes clear in the first four lines of the introductory note ...

"This is not a definite history of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University. It must be considered rather a compilation of some rough notes taken from conversations with a few participants. Others who lived through the same events will surely find important omissions and distortions. The full story can only be told when Tsinghua people themselves get together and recreate it from the thousands of sources that now exist but may soon be dispersed beyond

recall. Much of the story is recorded in collections of posters, leaflets, telegrams and letters. Much more still resides only in the heads of the people who took part."

Accepting the omissions and distortions that must be attendant upon any account of this kind, the author then deals with the question which naturally follows - ...

"Why then tell the story now? Well, fools rush in where angels fear to tread. I feel that the story, partial and biased as it may be, still contains important lessons. For one thing, the history of the Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua helps explain what the old, revisionist education was really like and why people rose up en masse against it. For another it shows how this education, the educators themselves and their students were transformed, or at least how this transformation began ...

Far more important is the story of how "right" and "left" political lines developed in the mass movement, and in particular how an "ultra-left" line emerged, dominated the field for a time and then was defeated. From beginning to end the soundness and vitality of Mao Tse-Tung's approach to the socialist revolution stands out. By reviewing these events one can begin to understand the crucial role which Mao played in mobilis-

ing the mass movement when this was the key to the future and then in guiding it through one crisis after another as "right" and "left" deviations threaten to destroy it.

This can be a revelation to those who think that seizing power is the ultimate act of revolution".

The opening chapter describes the evidence of struggle still remaining when William Hinton and his companions arrive on the campus in the summer of 1971 - damage and destruction wrought by weapons which ranged from bricks and stones through Molotov cocktails, bullets and grenades and included several home made canon ...

"... one of which had such a fierce recoil that it drove itself into the campus creek when fired and never was recovered."

That such evidence remained is of itself a pointer to the change that has been wrought by the Cultural Revolution, change in fundamental ideas as to what education is all about.

"Some of the neglect may also be attributed to the fact that the new education, now in the experimental stage, is not campus orientated but has its face turned outward toward the whole city Students now spend as much time in the factories and on the construction sites of greater Peking as they do in classrooms and laboratories, and professors devote as much energy to developing liason with the scores of factories and enterprises with which the university is allied as

they do to lecturing and advising students.

No longer will thousands of privileged young men and women withdraw into the leafy wonderland of Tsinghua to crack books until they are too old to laugh ... and then emerge after years of isolation from production and political engagement unable to tell high-carbon steel from ordinary steel or a proletarian revolutionary from a revisionist."

The extent of this change is only apparent when the historical background to education in China is considered. Tsinghua University is a particular example that serves to illustrate the general rule. Founded by Americans in 1911, its purpose was to produce an elite of intellectuals who would be pointed in the right direction during their formative years, thus developing a mind to serve more readily their masters.

Education in China was Western provided and Western orientated. Between 1900 and the outbreak of the Second World War, thousands of Chinese students pursued their "further" education in America, Britain, France, etc; Not only did they return to China with a mind to perpetuate this Western orientated educational system, many took back with them particular customs and eccentricities of the intellectual strata in the country where they received their advanced tuition, e.g. Oxford and Cambridge in Britain, the Left Bank in France, and so on.

As a result the image that many of the Chinese people had, and indeed still have, of the Frenchman, American, Englishman, etc. has its origin in the impressions gained

from these returning hybrids. It is an image that changes very slowly.

Despite energetic attempts by the Communist Party after 1949, which included the incorporation of political education and manual work on the land into the curriculum, Tsinghua remained very much in the grip of "western trained academic authorities. When China turned to the Soviet Union for aid and inspiration during the fifties this only made matters worse.

This then is the background. Vivid and detailed contributions, conveying the very real effects of such influence upon the mind, are made by several professors who were responsible for the old set-up.

For example, Professor T'ung Shih-pai of The Automotive Dept.-

"In 1962, Liu Shao-chi came to Tsinghua and called us professors the stable elements. He asked us to write the text books that would be used all over the country. I became the editor in chief of the electronics material and right up to the Cultural Revolution the teaching material I edited had a great influence all over the country. I saw nothing wrong with it. I thought that natural science has no class character. Capitalists use electronics, socialists use electronics. So I just dusted off my old material and spread out my wares.

But in fact I never considered whether what I wrote was useful for the education of workers, peasants and soldiers. I wrote not to serve the people but to display my talents and demonstrate my learning

An able worker who had made a number of inventions lost confidence in himself after he heard me explain Ohm's Law. He felt he could never understand electricity.

Soviet Influence

Hinton writes;

"Had this Professor T'ung been a 'bourgeois academic authority'? He is personally convinced that he had. And at Tsinghua he had a lot of company. We talked with his nephew, T'ing Liu-Hsiu, who had come back from the Soviet Union with a degree in architecture ... In the Soviet Union he found the whole university career orientated and the study of architecture as divorced from practice as it had been in China under the old Western system...

On leaving the Soviet university he was given three gifts which summed up the Russian approach to academic life. The first was a leather brief case to keep his Ph.D thesis in, the second was a wooden box with a hand painted picture of the Kremlin on it, to keep his awards and medals in, and the third was a leather wallet..... the purpose of which could hardly be in doubt."

The use of grades as the sole measure of merit, the putting of "expertise" in command, the repeated extension of the study period and the drive for book knowledge, all were paramount in China during the 50s.

Then in 1960, following drought and flood, the Soviet Union withdrew all aid and advice and Liu Shao-chi withdrew students.

from their work in the countryside in order the better to concentrate on their studies and thus raise the quality of education. So the trend developed and it was this that the rebels repudiated.

The conversations which constitute the basis of this book took place over a period of nineteen days and the major contribution was made by staff members who had taken part in the rebel movement throughout. On opposite sides during the bitter struggle, they were able to come together in an earnest and good natured attempt to produce an objective account. Along with them were high Communist Party cadres who had backed the professors, and students who had recently entered the university.

One of the cadres was Liu Ping, vice secretary of the Tsingua University Party Committee from 1956-66. The absence of the President, Chiang Nan-hsiang for most of the time gave him every opportunity to re-fashion the Tsingua system along the lines of Resistance University, Yenan, directed by Lin Piao and supervised by Mao, where he had been trained. In fact he did nothing of the sort.

He now considered the crucial question, that of the Communist Party leadership and in particular the essential question of which class forces lead the Party.

"As to the question of the Communist Party as the vanguard, Mao Tse-tung teaches that the Party must lead regardless of the situation or place...

... But Chiang Nan hsiang said that in the university the Party must be a professors party, a lecturers party. Once it becomes a party of professors and lecturers then it can run the University...

.....So we actively recruited professors into the Communist Party. The slogan was, "To recruit Mei Lan-fang (a famous Peking opera star) is better than recruiting 100 banner carriers." With this type of thinking we tried to develop the professors politically and bring them into the Party...

...Our position was that all intellectuals had a complicated political history so we needn't look into it too deeply. That was Chiang Nan-Hsiang's position ...

Once the professors joined the Party, we brought them quickly into the branches, department and university-level Party Committees. But once they got in they spread their own thinking about education throughout the Party... This gradually changed the nature of the Communist Party as a proletarian vanguard vanguard. But I never saw this as a two line struggle".

At the time of the conversations, Liu Ping was once again the vice secretary of the Tsingua University Party Committee.

But in 1966 the rebels had, in the early stages, centred their attacks upon president Chiang Nan Hsiang and the two vice secretaries Liu Ping and Hu Chien, these being the "party people in authority" on the campus and ultimately responsible for education that the students were receiving. Chiang was not only the president of Tsingua and secretary of the Party Committee, he was also the Minister of Higher Education in the central government and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

The Party Committee responded with their own poster campaign and there ensued a period of intense activity and growing pressure. On June 10th 1966, Liu Shao-chi sent a Work Team to the University. Initially this was welcomed by the rebel students who believed that the Team would support them against the "capitalist roaders".

Repression

It quickly became clear that the Work Team was there to quell and repress the upheaval and they immediately began confining the rebels to their quarters and assigning them to studies, and it is at this point that a figure central to the entire campaign appears for the first time, Kuai Ta-fu.

As the counter attack by the Work Team in alliance with the Party Committee became more oppressive, causing some of the rebel support to fall away, Kuai emerged as the symbol of the rebel lion. As he was the most militant student, the Work Team concentrated their attack on him. Conversely, if you opposed the Work Team, you supported Kuai - and he proved more than equal to the task.

"Kuai Ta-fu operated like the commanding general of an army that had absolute confidence in the rightness of its cause and absolute faith in its final victory. When his support fell away around him he never wavered or retreated one inch. On the contrary he always seemed to be on the offensive, taking up and refuting each point made by the Work Team leader, Yeh Lin, in public speeches and a constant stream of wallposters that, even when they were immediately ripped

off the walls, still tore the mantle of legitimacy off the Work Team and shook the whole campus and city of Peking ... If the Work Team was to stand at all it had to destroy Kuai, but the more vigorously it mobilized against him, the more tenaciously he mounted the counter attack."

It is here that the account becomes much more than an account of derring-do with the goodies and baddies receiving their just rewards and rightful deserts respectively. For the very qualities that fitted Kuai so well for his role as defender of the faith were to prove destructively negative at a later stage in the conflict.

"Kuai's unusual self confidence bordered on arrogance, an arrogance which when matched against an oppressive Work Team was positive and progressive but when matched against fellow students who did not accept his leadership turned into something ugly and dictatorial ... From this it was but a small leap to "I am the core" which made unity in the struggle against revisionism all but impossible.

In a secret message to his closest companions, Kuai warned that as long as they were called "counter revolutionaries" they should not admit the slightest weakness or error lest it be used by the Team to beat them down. In the situation that then existed this was perhaps a justifiable tactic but it laid the groundwork for a cynical disregard for truth in the factional struggle that followed, each side hiding its own mistakes and lying about its actions while grabbing at every weakness of the other side, blowing small errors to huge pro-

portions in order to destroy the opposition politically.

All this, however, only came out later.

At the time, what Kuai's comrades, the embattled rebels, saw in him was fearlessness, principled opposition to an oppressive Work Team, polemical skill of a high order and extraordinary leadership ability. Kuai Ta-fu became a hero of the left, not only at Tsinghua, but throughout the country ..."

The Struggle Broadens

From Tsinghua groups of students travelled to other regions taking a leading part in what eventually became a nationwide struggle. Their experience at Tsinghua proved an asset that enabled them to influence the course of events wherever they went and this in turn broadened their experience still further.

The negative effect was that their ego became inflated and they began to see their role as the centre of the universe.

Moving outside the campus also hastened the already growing realisation that the struggle they were involved in was part of a conflict involving persons in the top-most positions of power.

An example of this is given when the authorities in Sinkiang issued warrants for their arrest, whilst at the same time the "People's Daily" issued a call to all workers and peasants to support the revolutionary students. The warrants were not executed.

The major part of the book describes the rapid escalation that took place. The formation of rival Red Guard organisations, the return of the roving students to Peking

and the developing conviction that China's future rested upon their shoulders.

The use by the right of ultra-left tactics in an attempt to bring about anarchy and thus seize power; how the rebel students, as the struggle grew and involved persons at an ever higher level, themselves took up an ultra-left position and became subject to "I am the core" thinking; how objectivity was submerged and the question of right and wrong became, not a matter of policy, but of who you supported; all this is told not in abstract terms but in the terms of the concrete experience of those who took part.

During this time, Kuai Ta-fu became a national figure to the extent illustrated by the following passage.

"Kuai, sitting in front of his military map like a commanding general at staff headquarters, sent a stream of cables and letters to the far corners of the land, naming targets, suggesting strategies, prodding laggards and praising activists. At this time Kuai's prestige was such that his words carried as much, if not more, weight than those of many members of the Central Committee, which most militants assumed he was defending."

To what extent Kuai was carried along by the tide of events is open to doubt. In the early stages he based his campaign on support for Mao Tse-tung. But in the later stage Mao called a meeting between himself, Kuai and four rebel student leaders, at which he told Kuai that he "was not only swollen in the head but swollen all over".

Nevertheless, Kuai persisted in his cam-

paign and also persisted in the assertion that he enjoyed Mao's support. Even at the end when the efforts of workers and peasants to develop an alliance on the campus had weaned much of Kuai's support and he is faced, at a public meeting, with evidence that he had ordered the use of "hot" weapons, an order that resulted in the deaths of students and workers, he remained unrepentant. The author comments:

"Kuai's defiance raises a number of questions. If he had indeed degenerated into a bourgeois opportunist as all affirmed, why would he not try to salvage something from the debacle by cooperating? Why would he guarantee a harsh settlement of his case by defying the new Tsinghua revolutionary committee to the end? Either, it seems to me, he was innocent of the main charge - that of being a counter revolutionary conspirator - or he had backing in high places which led him to believe that the tables might be reversed."

Workers' Control

Since the account is centred upon a university, the main action involves students. On the occasions when workers are referred to, contradictory aspects are shown.

Following the development of armed struggle on the campus with buildings occupied by one faction and besieged by the other; attack and counter-attack; several deaths and many injured; and buildings set on fire, this stage of events is brought to an end by workers and peasants marching on to the campus.

Their coolness and restraint is expressed in their slogan, "Use reason, not violence." Many thousands strong, they called upon the

students to hand in their guns and form an alliance.

Both student factions endeavoured to force the workers to take their side and they were subjected to violent attacks from both sides. Despite provocation and a casualty list including five dead and over seven hundred seriously wounded, they persisted in their endeavour and eventually accomplished a cessation to hostilities.

The contrary aspect is illustrated by the "Wuhan" incident where, it was reported, an organisation called the "Million Heroes" and composed mainly of workers, backed the military commander of the region, Ch'en To'ai-tao, who used armed forces to crush the rebel students and workers who were calling for his overthrow. Dozens were killed and many injured.

When two members of the Central Cultural Revolutionary Group went to try and settle the issue, Ch'en arrested them. It required the intervention of Chou En-lai on the spot to secure their release and the arrest of the military commander.

Further, a footnote refers to the intervention of armed P.L.A. forces at the Shanghai Diesel Engine plant to put down what was regarded as a "mutiny".

Towards a New Society

The end of the violence was not the end of the Cultural Revolution. Having taken power the task is to use it. In two chapters headed "Revolutionizing Education" and "Intellectual Remoulded" the author relates the efforts being made to apply the new concept in the field of education. The setting up of education transformation groups to evaluate and reconstruct; the integration of theory and practice; and the

rebuilding of an admissions policy in line with Mao Tse-tung's directive that workers, peasants and soldiers should be the core of every student body. But above all, he conveys something of the enthusiasm that pervades the scene, the enthusiasm of a people breaking into new and exciting territory.

Some idea of the gap between the two roads may be had when the author asks how, under the new system, students are not only brought up to the technical level of today, but enabled to advance scientific knowledge.

"I asked the question because it is generally assumed in the West that research scientists, the real innovators, must be some sort of an elite which, under special conditions,... uses its brains ... to break through to important discoveries. Since the productive years are so short, it would be absurd to ask these people to engage in productive labour..."

In reply, Lin Ming-yi, a worker from the Capital Steel Works explained that students who came from worker, peasant and soldier's backgrounds, return to their place of origin after graduation and link research to practical problems. A few students are assigned to research institutions and are engaged full time in solving problems.

But whichever is the case, research is done by three in one teams (worker, scientist, cadres) and physical work is shared.

"Liu cited the problem of the Peking Refinery as a typical example. If the problems of pollution could not be solved the refinery could not continue to operate because it was too damaging to its surroundings. This stimulated fundamental research into the transforma-

tion of waste. Organic and biological methods were developed for the treatment of polluted water and these raised very complicated scientific problems. They also involved the extensive use of nightsoil as a breeding source for the necessary bacteria. Since everyone recognised the great significance of the research, everyone, including the top scientists, joined in handling the nightsoil, digging it from privvies and transporting it to the experimental sites.

What Liu stressed over and over again was the importance of involving masses of people in research and not leaving it to the few."

Shaping the Future from the Past

Whilst the ultra left had wanted to discard the old bourgeois-trained intellectuals, Mao Tse-tung stressed that their knowledge was vital if the transformation of China's educational system was to be successful. To fulfil their role they had to be remoulded and this task was accomplished by a variety of means. There are some amusing and very relevant examples of the teacher being taught.

"Intensive study convinced Ch'ien Wei-ch'ang, T'ung Shih-pai and many others that there was something basically wrong about their attitude and work in the work in the past, but it took more than study and discussion to inspire them with a new set of ideals and goals. The next step was to involve them in productive work where they could get to know and share the life of ordinary people..."

Ch'ien Wei-ch'ang, for his part, went to the Capital Steel Mill to work and

teach. One day he went to fetch a piece of high carbon steel. In the laboratory of Tsinghua where he had modern testing equipment he had lectured on the difference between high carbon and ordinary steel and had demonstrated again and again how to tell them apart through hardness tests, tests of tensile strength etc., but he had never had to pick out the original samples, an assistant had always done this work. All the steel looked exactly alike....

Professor Ch'ien lingered...wondering what to do. A young worker guessed his dilemma, came over quietly and showed him how, by hitting each piece with another piece of steel one could tell from the sound which was hard and which was soft. The young worker was not calling him a fool or ridiculing him but was patiently helping him. He thanked the young man. The response was, "Never mind Professor Ch'ien, we always knew that your theory was divorced from practice and now you can know it too. Here on the production site you can bring the two together." "

The Enigma

At the end, the author raises the question of the part played by Lin Piao in the struggle, a question that then, as now, remains unanswered.

"The fall of Lin Piao in September 71 put this whole problem in a new framework. One had to assume that the ultra

left line, up to that point blamed on Ch'en Po-ta, must ling through to Lin Piao himself. If this was indeed the case then, if Kuai had a mentor in "heaven", it must have been Lin Piao

and Kuai's stubbornness could be interpreted as unwillingness to bow his head as long as Lin Piao stood firm.

and later -

" it would hardly make sense to take at face value the estimate of Kuai Ta-fu and the May 16 group we heard at Tsinghua during our visit. Right at that time the biggest problem of "left" politics, Lin Piao, was still riding high and as a result a large part of the struggle then going on was concealed. Many key questions could even be raised not to mention answered and contradictions in what we heard abounded."

On the final page the closing lines "find" and leave the Chinese people facing the immense task of rebuilding on the principle of "struggle - criticism - transformation".

"In 1971 we found the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese people struggling to free themselves from a 'left' dogmatic line which tended to distort every facet of life, raise impossible goals and reject countless good cadres as inept and venal. Everywhere large numbers of 'set aside' civilians remained in May 7 Cadre schools or on detached service in the countryside while army personnel, some of it poorly qualified, held down a disproportionate number of positions on the revolutionary committees and in the administrative apparatus of the provinces, regions, counties and municipalities...Key spots such as Tsinghua, where questions of rehabilitation were solved relatively early, seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Tsinghua's advanced position

was due to the fact that it had been chosen as a breakthrough point by Mao Tse-tung and had been led by the best, most politically developed officers of the 8341 Army."

Followed by the final footnote -

"To what extent the 8341 Army may have been under Lin Piao's influence is another question with disturbing implications. It is a question impossible to answer at this time.

Some Questions

The Cultural Revolution had as its objective the removal from authority of all those pursuing the capitalist road and the weakening of the domination of bourgeois ideology. The extent to which it was successful remains to be seen and Mao certainly envisages many cultural revolutions being necessary, what we might call in this space age, "mid course corrections".

This apart, the positive aspect of the Cultural Revolution is that vast numbers of people were involved in the struggle, were able to test the validity of the principles expounded by Mao Tse-tung and observe the effects of not adhering to those principles.

For if power is not to be usurped by a minority during the transition to socialism which, as Mao states, will itself occupy an entire historical period, there must be a continual extension of democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat through the involvement of the masses in every aspect of life, work and culture.

If the book ends on a question that has disturbing implications for the author, we must end with questions that we find equally disturbing.

At Tsinghua, armed struggle between student factions was brought to an end by the intervention of workers in their thousands. In spite of severe casualties suffered as a result of attacks from both sides, they maintained their passive role, refusing to be provoked.

Eventually they brought the two sides together and, having established a stable situation, began the enormous task of transforming both the education system and those intellectuals on whose ability and experience the success of the endeavour would depend.

This contrasts sharply with the incident at the Shanghai Diesel Engine Plant, briefly referred to in a footnote, where the People's Liberation Army intervened with guns to "put down" what was regarded as a "mutiny".

Why the difference in method?

What made the Shanghai affair a "mutiny" as opposed to the "revolution" that occurred at Tsinghua?

Was the rehabilitation at the Engine Plant as painstaking and patiently constructive?

These and many other questions deserve, if not demand, an answer.

Would it be too much to ask that some intrepid soul might set about the task of compiling an account on the level of "Hundred Day War", but centred upon industrial workers and the effects of the Cultural Revolution upon industrial organisation.

We hopefully anticipate such an account and would, if asked, nominate William Hinton for the task.

The editors notes inform us that "Hundred Day War" is to be issued as a Monthly Review Press Book.

The Importance of Class

T. Hill

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels wrote,

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified class antagonism. Society as a whole is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other; Bourgeoisie and Proletariat".

In his forward to the English edition of 1888, Engels defines the proletariat as "the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live".

It is undoubtedly true that the fundamental contradiction in capitalist society is the one stated in the Communist Manifesto but it by no means denied the existence of contradictions within each of the two main classes, neither did it maintain that this division had already been completed and other classes eliminated.

Further, such a simple definition of class does not help us to understand the contradictions in modern capitalist society, neither does it explain the emergence of a new exploiting class in states where the means of production are socially owned.

Theoretically, according to the aforementioned definition, all classes must be abolished as soon as private property in the

means of production has been abolished.

In his speech on the Draft Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Stalin said,

"The landlord class, as you know had already been eliminated as a result of the victorious conclusion of the Civil War. As for the other exploiting classes, they have shared the fate of the landlord class. The capitalist class in the sphere of industry has ceased to exist. The Kulak class in the sphere of agriculture has ceased to exist. And the merchants and profiteers in the sphere of trade have ceased to exist. Thus all the exploiting classes have been eliminated. There remains the working class, the peasant class and the intelligentsia". Problems of Leninism, p.543. Foreign Languages Pub House.

He then goes on to explain how these three classes have changed since the revolution and continues;

"What do these changes signify? Firstly, they signify that the dividing lines between the working class and the peasantry, and between these classes and the intelligentsia, are being obliterated, and that the old class exclusiveness is disappearing. This means that the distance between these social groups is steadily diminishing. Secondly, they signify that the economic contradictions between these soci-

groups are declining, are becoming obliterated.

And lastly, they signify that the political contradictions between them are also declining and becoming obliterated." page 544, Problems of Leninism.

Further. "The capitalist class has already been eliminated and the instruments and means of production have been taken from the capitalists and transferred to the state, of which the leading force is the working class. Consequently, there is no longer a capitalist class which could exploit the working class. Consequently, our working class far from being bereft of the instruments and means of production, on the contrary, possess them jointly jointly with the whole people.

And since it possess them, and the capitalist class has been eliminated, all possibility of the working class being exploited has been eliminated."

(our emphasis, T.H.)

The events which have taken place in the Soviet Union since the death of Stalin have led many Marxists to the conclusion that it can no longer be categorised as a worker's state, but has degenerated into a state where the workers are once again a subject class.

It was evident even during Stalin's lifetime that the managerial and top echelons of the technical strata, because of the positions of power and influence which they held, were able to exercise a great deal of influence over the running of the economy.

Since the death of Stalin, their influence and power has increased to the extent that their interests dominate the Party and the

state, thus changing its character.

The theory of the state of the whole people as distinct from the theory of the state of the proletariat is in conformity with the interests of this class. The theory that there cannot be any fundamental clash of interests within soviet society is one of the preconditions for the continuation in power of this new elite because the working class is politically disarmed by it.

Their vicious opposition to Mao mainly stems from his contention that classes and class struggle will continue for a long period even after the means of production have been taken out of private ownership. Some aspects of the Proletarian Cultural revolution indicated that this same situation is arising in China, but the chances of a new elite becoming the dominant force in China is reduced by the acceptance that classes exist and class struggle will continue to be necessary.

When we say that Stalin has been proved wrong in his belief that all possibility of the working class being exploited had been eliminated, it is not to try to denigrate him but simply to record that what was considered to be theoretically impossible has happened in practice. In such circumstances we must seek the explanation in the inadequacy of the theory as distinct from trying to make the theory fit the facts.

We submit that this phenomenon can only be explained if we embrace in the concept of class not only the relationship to the ownership of the means of production of different strata of society but, in addition, its relation to the productive process, the actual production of material values, the degree of actual control over the production process and its relationship to the state machine.

A booklet published by the Novosti Press Agency entitled Industrial Management - Soviet Experience, gives support to this theory.

"Since in the Soviet Union the basic means of production are state owned, nationwide planned economic development is in the hands of the state. Soviet workers run their industry through the organs of Soviet power, the state machinery for economic management and the public organisations."

It will be noticed that there is no mention here of workers having any real power or influence at the actual point of production, the point where they are most capable of doing so.

This is underlined by the statement on page 11.

"The term one man management stands for the subordination of the personnel of each and every enterprise to the will of the manager."

Page 104.

"The directors orders and instructions are obligatory to all employees because he is the representative of the Soviet state."

Page 13.

"One man management has nothing in common with absolute rule in production management but serves only the people's interests."

The underlying assumption behind all these statements is that as there is no private ownership in the means of production, there cannot be any division of interest, therefore the decisions of the director must be

in the best interests of all.

Did anyone mention paternalism?

The matter does not stop there.
Page 114.

"Section foremen are vested with extensive authority.

Foremen are authorised to determine workers' skill grades and issue bonuses in their section, paid out of a special monthly fund equal to 3% of the wage bill.

Foremen also have the right to recommend that good workers be given bonuses and other kinds of encouragement by the shop or enterprise administration and that penalties be imposed upon workers who violate discipline, produce defective items, etc."

Further, page 112.

"Along with performing his managerial and technical supervisory function, the shop superintendent is also the educator and political guide of the body of workers in his charge. Together with the trade union organisation and other public organisations he must cultivate in all his subordinates (our emphasis, T.H.) a sense of responsibility to their respective jobs. In performing his duties, the shop superintendent is supported by his authority as organiser and specialist and by public organisations and enjoys the right of exercising moral and material influence upon the members of his collective.

The power which the directors, managers and supervisors wield over the ordinary worker is considerable and linked with the growing emphasis on material incentives.

Page 14.

"The use of economic lever in managing soviet industry has considerably increased in recent years."

Page 5.

"Today, material incentives are beginning to play an increasingly important part in production management."

This being so, it is easy to see how this increases the power of the managerial and supervisory grades.

Is it surprising that the delegation of the Institute of Directors which visited the Soviet Union reported that they and their Soviet counterparts had much in common and are faced with similar problems.

The growing emphasis on material rewards after more than fifty years of a proletarian dictatorship is a sure sign that not only are the leaders imbued with capitalist ideas but, in addition, they are using capitalist methods of dividing the workers.

General Conclusions

It seems to us that, within the general context of the question of who owns the means of production, there is a secondary contradiction which is related to the question of the place in the productive and distributive process occupied by various strata who may nominally come under the heading of proletariat. When the fundamental contradiction is resolved by the expropriation of the means of production by the revolutionary state, what was the secondary contradiction becomes one of great importance and this is strongly connected with eliminating the difference between manual and mental labour.

The emphasis which Mao places on taking a regular part in manual productive labour seems to underline this point.

Our conclusions from this are that it is incorrect to base any analysis of classes in Britain solely on the simple criterion of who lives by working as distinct from owning. It seems to us that serious account must be taken of the relationship of each group, strata, or class (we are not arguing about names) to the actual physical production of material values, etc.

Such an analysis will define the stable core around which the unity of all other classes and strata must be formed in order to overthrow the relatively small group of monopoly capitalists.

* * * * *

It is intended that this will be the starting point for a series of articles in future issues.

NEW READERS AND SUBSCRIBERS

Will you assist by:-

Becoming a regular subscriber and

Sending in names and addresses of people

interested in seeing a specimen copy.

Pollution

J. Hill

To date, the campaign against pollution has certainly achieved success, if only to the extent that the major industrial companies now feel obliged to feature it in their advertisements in order to assure us of their concern.

The initiative and support for the campaign still comes almost wholly from the middle and professional classes, but the working class has, up to the present, remained uninvolved.

Whilst we as individuals or groups may not include the fight against pollution as one of our priorities, it should not deter us from giving encouragement and, if possible, support to people who are interested and active in this field.

It is only by going through this experience that people will become convinced of the impossibility of securing overall and lasting improvements in environmental standards as long as the present political and economic system is in existence.

This does not mean that some forms of pollution cannot be remedied under capitalism; the example of the extension of pollution free waterways is a good one, although this advance may prove to be only temporary.

The use of nitrogen fertilizer to increase the yield per acre would appear to be a solution to the world's food problems, but this would only hold true if the area under cultivation either increased, or at least remained constant.

Unfortunately however increased production is only profitable when there is effective demand for the increased supply of com-

modities. Beyond a certain level of production the price begins to fall and production is cut back to allow prices to rise.

Because it is the yield per acre which determines the profit, a cut back in production results not in a reduction in the amount of fertilizer, but of the acreage planted, therefore we arrive back in the same position in terms of food produced but with additional problems of the pollution brought about by the fertilizer.

EFFECTS OF NITRATE POLLUTANTS

The nitrate fertilizer is washed into the rivers and when these are used as a source of drinking water, concentrations beyond a certain level become dangerous because the nitrate is converted into nitrite in the intestines of the consumers, particularly infants.

The result being a form of anaemia, clinically termed methaemoglobin anaemia.

Cases of nitrate pollution in water rising above the acceptable level, have recently come to light in Yorkshire.

This is difficult to establish with scientific accuracy due to the secrecy with which the details of pollution levels are protected.

One may imagine that in a matter of such public concern, the authorities would welcome the dissemination of information to interested parties, such as socially conscious scientists and conservationists, but the opposite is the case.

Section 287 of the Public Health Act, 1936 threatens local officials with three months imprisonment for disclosing such information.

Details of discharges of effluent into public rivers and sewers are kept but it is an offence to reveal them to the public.

Some prosecutions do however take place but the fines imposed are derisory.

The chief inspector of the Alkali and Clean Air Inspectorate reported thirty-eight instances of infringements of pollution control regulations. These were at works involved in processes for metal recovery, lead hydrogen fluoride, nitric acid, aluminium, ceramics, sulphuric acid, hydrochloric acid and gas and coke.

In two cases fines were imposed, one of £25 and one of £101.

LEAD POLLUTION -

The increasing level of atmospheric pollution due to emissions of lead from the internal combustion engine is another example.

Lead Tetra Ethyl is introduced into petrol in order to prevent 'pinking'. The alternative is to build motor vehicles to a higher technical standard, thus increasing the cost and with it the possibilities of reduced profits.

- AND THE CAR.

The transfer of traffic from rail to road is another aspect which involves pollution of the environment, but on a broader scale.

It is said that traffic is transferred from rail to road because it is more economical. Even if this were true, it would still be wrong to allow it to continue but when one looks into the matter it is not a

question of cost- but of profit.

The cost of the permanent way, signalling, observance of safety regulations, etc, is all borne by the Railway but the road haulier's costs are confined to the running of his particular vehicle or vehicles. The cost of new roads, their upkeep, flyovers, the sorting out of traffic problems, etc, is largely borne by the general taxpayer.

If the heavy vehicles were made to pay in relation to the general wear and tear which they cause on the roads and the time lost in traffic jams and accidents, the Road Hauliers would not find it so profitable.

Add to this the inconvenience and hardship caused by the destruction of practically new houses, the taking over of farm land and the increase in atmospheric and noise pollution that all this entails, one can see that the profit of the few is considered to be of more importance than the welfare of the many.

Politicians and Civil servants have for some time indicated that they are aware of the need to remove the laws of secrecy surrounding pollution control but there is evidence that powerful lobbies are at work to prevent the dissemination of any information which is likely to be detrimental to their vested interests.

For instance, the attacks on the Waltham Cross Urban District Council for making known tentative plans for a new motorway in the area and, on a higher level, the police search of the Railway Review premises and the threatened prosecution of the Sunday Times for disclosing a secret report which advocates a cut back from the existing railway network of 11,600 miles to 7,000 miles, with the possibility of an even smaller system of 3,800 miles.

A Labour Aristocracy

Brent Marxist Industrial Group

The following article is an expanded form of a paper presented by the Brent Marxist Industrial Group to a conference on the Labour Aristocracy.

We consider it to be a fact that relatively privileged strata exist amongst other sections of the working population, and whilst we do not underestimate the need to unite as many as possible of these strata against the main enemy, the monopolists, our starting point is that the main and leading revolutionary force in Britain will be the industrial working class.

It is therefore our understanding that the question of a labour aristocracy should be considered specifically in relation to this class.

Imperialism

It is said that the superprofits derived from imperialist exploitation of the underdeveloped countries enable the capitalist class of the metropolitan country to make concessions to its own working class sufficient to prevent it from becoming revolutionary.

This was certainly true in the heyday of British imperialism and, we hold, is true today, although to a lesser degree due to the growth of the national liberation movements and the decline of British imperialism.

Lenin pointed out that these superprofits provide the economic basis for the labour

aristocracy and reformism.

We contend that the main effect of the superprofits derived from imperialist exploitation is to partially (but temporarily) counteract the general tendency for the rate of profit to fall, which is a basic economic law of capitalism.

It is the operation of this law which is compelling the ruling class to attack the living standards of the producers of wealth wherever they may be.

The extraction of superprofits from the underdeveloped areas of the world results in the burden of the capitalist crisis bearing most heavily on the people in those areas, thus allowing the capitalist class in the metropolitan country to manoeuvre more freely in the struggle with the workers in the home country and so avoid the development of a revolutionary situation at the centre of the empire.

The creation of a Labour Aristocracy.

This is sometimes seen as though it were the consequence of a direct political decision by the ruling class.

In our view, and in the general context referred to above, the existence, growth or decline of privileged sections within the industrial working class is primarily due to the internal development of capitalist society.

For example, the decline of the old aristocracy of labour is being brought about mainly by technological change and the continued division of labour in the productive process.

This is to be clearly seen in the engineering industry where the attitude of mind expressive of the labour aristocracy is known as the craft outlook.

Even though the material basis for this outlook is being rapidly eroded, the outlook still persists. It is a dying, but not a spent force.

The erosion of its material base was made certain by the development of mass production industry which necessitates a greater and greater division of labour and a corresponding dilution of the old craft skills.

Fifty years or so ago a toolmaker was expected to be capable of performing all the operations necessary to produce a given part, but now each operation is specialised and very few are capable of all round work.

An instrument maker made the instrument almost from start to finish, but this is the exception today.

The change has been brought about by the continual division of labour which has undermined the position of the craftsman and created a whole new strata of labour commonly referred to as the semi skilled.

In passing it should be noted that this categorisation is incorrect and harmful to the cause of the working class because it perpetuates the idea of an elite.

It is useful to the employer because it

allows him to use cheaper labour to produce the same article.

The outlook of the labour aristocracy is exemplified in the argument that the reason for opposing entry into the craft trades for all except the time served men is in order to protect the standards of the craft.

The real reason of course is to try to limit the number entering the trade in order to create an artificial shortage and thus keep up the price for that type of labour power.

This is another example of the outlook of the labour aristocracy which still persists.

Craft Unions.

The development of what is now the A.E.F from what was a craft union confined to time served men into almost an industrial union is a reflection of the declining importance and influence of the old aristocracy of labour.

Originally a craft union, it was gradually forced to accept non-craft workers into membership.

Although there have been many outstanding individuals who fought to change it into an industrial union from the best of political motives, the decisive factor increasing the need for this change and breaking down opposition to it from the old labour aristocracy was the development of the division of labour in the engineering industry.

Jobs formerly performed by time served men were broken down and methods changed so that they could be performed by other workers who required less training and were

therefore paid lower wages.

It was this eroding of the craftsmen's position which finally compelled them to accept in their own interests the admittance of non craft workers into their union as a means of trying to limit or prevent this erosion.

Another related factor was that the General unions were beginning to get a foothold in the industry and a powerful organization of so-called unskilled or semi skilled workers, pursuing their own sectional interests, could well undermine the position of the craftsmen still further.

The reduction of wage differentials between the craft sections and higher paid strata of production workers employed on systems of payment by results was an indication of the decline of this section of the labour aristocracy. The position in regard to wage differentials was reversed to the extent that it became necessary for the unions to get agreement with the engineering employers to ensure that the wages of toolmakers should not fall below those of skilled production workers. This became known as the 1940 Tool Room Agreement.

The necessity for this agreement was a clear indication that the economic position of the "elite" could no longer be maintained by their own unaided strength but could only be secured by using the whole weight of the union on their behalf.

A further indication of the relative decline in importance of this strata was the dispute about twelve months ago when the Government Association of Engineering Employers successfully terminated a local agreement based on the national one referred to

above which guaranteed that toolmakers in the district would receive not less than the average earnings of pieceworkers in the district.

In 1940 such an agreement was necessary to the employers but in 1972 they did not need it.

This action of the employers brought to an end the situation in which the pieceworkers did the fighting and the toolmakers shared the benefits.

There will no doubt be a time lag but the changed situation will sooner or later reflect itself in a changed attitude on the part of the toolmakers.

Contradictions

To study the question of a labour aristocracy in isolation is to condemn oneself to studying only one aspect of a contradiction.

We must not only study the strata within the working class which are conservative and tend to hold the class back but also the new, developing, potentially revolutionary strata which will tend to push the whole class forward.

In order to make some headway in this direction we consider it necessary to study the question in one major industry and, at a later stage, to see if the conclusions reached on this basis apply in general terms.

To investigate the contradictions amongst manual workers in the engineering industry alone is a monumental task, so all we are doing at the moment is to give an indication of our general approach and pose one of two problems.

Wages in Factory Organisation

The changes referred to previously have already brought about changes in the character of factory organisation.

Now it is more and more the production workers who are making the running and the interests of the mass of the workers as distinct from those of the select few are beginning to dominate affairs at workshop level.

This varies from factory to factory and area to area but it is the developing trend which spells death to the influence of the old labour aristocracy.

Partially as a result of the power of factory organisation and partly in response to the needs of the employing class, wage levels between different factories vary a great deal and any attempt to define a labour aristocracy by means of national averages is of little practical value.

During recent negotiations in the engineering industry it came to light that 1% of skilled workers in the industry were earning less than £22 per week. This is an extreme example but it serves to illustrate the point when one reads that lavatory attendants in some factories in the Midlands are reputed to be earning in the region of £30 per week.

There are also wide differences in earnings between workers doing essentially the same job, such as between workers at B.M.C., Ford, and Vauxhall.

It can be seen that wage differentials, in the engineering industry at least, are not due to degrees of skill.

We suggest that they are a direct and inevitable result of the development of monopoly capitalism in Britain.

Plant Bargaining

The development of plant bargaining has been the method by which this disparity has been brought about but is itself only the expression of much deeper economic forces.

Big monopolies employing capital with a high organic composition in developing sections of the engineering industry have, when faced with "labour troubles" generally found (and still find) it more expedient to make concessions on wages (because variable capital is only a small proportion of the total) than to face stoppages of work which throws masses of constant capital idle.

At the other extreme are relatively small employers who are nominally independent but who in reality are entirely dependent upon the monopoly concerns which squeeze them so that their profit margins are extremely small.

This is reflected in the level of wages paid.

The following figures have been extracted from the Ministry of Employment Gazette, October 1972, and show levels of wages paid to similar categories of manual workers employed in samples of firms of different sizes.

Number of Manual Employees

	25 to 99	100 to 499	500 and over
	<u>Pence per hour</u>		
Fitters -			
Skilled	69.63	79.38	87.7*
Semi-skilled	62.83	69.21	83.75
Sheet Metal			
Workers	69.04	76.46	86.17
Patternmakers	73.75	76.08	91.38
Labourers	50.96	53.71	62.75

It appears to us that this is brought about through the operation of the basic law of monopoly capitalism expounded by Stalin in "Economic Problems of Socialism" in which he showed that monopoly capital can no longer be content with average profit as a condition for its development but demands maximum profit as a necessity.

According to Marxist theory, commodities exchange at their values which are determined by the socially necessary labour time taken to produce them.

With the coming of the machine age of capitalism value expresses itself in a modified form in which commodities tend to exchange at their price of production, that is variable capital (wages) plus constant capital (machinery, raw materials, buildings, etc.) plus the average rate of profit.

The flow of capital between the different branches of industry ensures that, over a period of time the rate of profit for each branch would have to approximate to the average level of profit for industry as a whole, and each individual capitalist has to obtain this average profit if he is to remain in business.

"The price of production is that average magnitude around which fluctuate, in the last analysis, the market prices of commodities, i.e. the prices at which commodities are actually bought and sold on the market."

"In reality the formation of an average rate of profit means a redistribution of surplus value among the capitalists in different branches of production. Part of the surplus value created in branches with a low organic

composition of capital is appropriated by the capitalists in the branches with a high composition of capital. It follows that the workers are exploited not only by those capitalists for whom they work but by the entire class of capitalists as a whole. The entire capitalist class has an interest in raising the degree to which the workers are exploited since this leads to a rise in the average rate of profit. As Marx showed, the average rate of profit is dependent on the degree to which the whole of labour is exploited by the whole of capital."

(Pages 191 and 192, "Political Economy", a textbook issued by the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. 1957.)

Monopoly Capitalism

Under conditions of monopoly capitalism the goods produced by the monopolies are sold not at their prices of production but at much higher monopoly prices.

"A monopoly price is equivalent to the cost of production plus the maximum profit, which considerably exceeds the average profit; a monopoly price is higher than the price of production and, as a rule, exceeds the value of the goods. At the same time monopoly prices, as Marx already pointed out, cannot abolish the limits set by the value of commodities. The high level of monopoly prices does not alter the total sum of value and surplus value produced in the world capitalist economy. One of the sources of the maximum profit received by the monopolies is the redistribution of surplus value, as a result of which

the level of profits declines considerably in the non-monopolised enterprises". (Political Economy, page 299)

As the non-monopoly enterprises employ a relatively lower organic composition of capital in which wages are a bigger part of the cost of production, an increase in wages can mean not simply a lower profit margin, but the difference between existence and extinction, therefore the pressure to keep wages down is much greater.

In the monopoly enterprises, on the other hand, where wages represent a much smaller part of total costs, the keeping down of wages is relatively less important. (within limits of course.)

Coupled with this, the strike power of workers employed in the monopoly enterprise is usually much greater.

This is not a question of workers with great strike power being "greedy", it is simply a fact of life that they possess more power.

The continued development of Plant and Company bargaining will, in our opinion, widen rather than narrow the gap between the higher and lower paid strata of the industrial workers.

Absolute Impoverishment

We see this as part of the problem of the absolute impoverishment of sections of the working population in the midst of a society where living standards are being maintained or even improved.

The ruling class are apparently aware of the dangers to the stability of the capital-

ist system which is inherent in this development and even the Tories have now become converted to the welfare state with emphasis on assisting the "lower paid".

Similar concern is also expressed by Victor Gollancz and the like.

They envisage their role as being one in which the trade union movement itself tries to exercise some regulation of wage increases.

They see the "dangers" of this uneven development and seek to resolve it by the reformist method of holding down the rate of wage increases for the higher paid and increasing the rate for the lower paid. They see it as a problem of regulating the wages share of the "national cake" whilst leaving profits essentially untouched.

All the schemes for rent rebates and negative income tax can, by their very nature, only benefit a very small proportion of the working class, but they are of great value to the ruling class who contrast their concern for the lower paid with the "disinterest" of the higher paid workers "who are always striking for more money and pushing up the cost of living".

We hope that we have shown that the holding down of the wages of the higher paid cannot be of any value to the lower paid.

The main economic effect would be to increase monopoly profits, but the political effect of winning support for such action from within the working class would be to strengthen the political hold of the ruling class and, in contrast to increasing the growth of revolutionary consciousness, would lay the door open for fascist

Why the Housing Act

Communist Unity Organisation (Grimsby)

In 1914 Christopher Addison, -Minister of Health in the Liberal government, proposed that local authorities build an unlimited number of houses at a controlled rent, subsidised by a 1d rate, and also with a government subsidy on top.

So began council housing. However, by 1921 the 'unlimited' had been dropped and council house building became controlled by the needs of the market, not the people.

From these beginnings we can see today how council house building is big business, for the big banks and Insurance Companies who loan money to the councils through the Government, and for the big building monopolies like Wimpey who make huge profits out of council house building. In fact, often directors of banks are sitting on the same board as the building giants.

An example of the kind of profits made out of supplying the council house building industry is the London Brick Company who made £6 million profit and expect near £10 million next year, without upping the production of bricks.

The huge profits made by all these concerned with council house building is due to the fact that under a market system the supply of houses is always held back so that demand and prices are always high.

However, it is the colossal interest rates paid by councils back to the big financiers, through the government which is at the roots of the Housing Finance Bill, and of every £1.00 paid in rent, 80p goes in interest charges.

COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON HOUSING

<u>RUNNING COSTS</u>	<u>REPAYMENTS ON LOANS</u>	<u>INTEREST CHARGES</u>
15%	20%	65%

IN 1969 £35,800,000 WAS COLLECTED IN RENT BY GREATER LONDON COUNCIL, YET £36,000,000 WAS PAID IN INTEREST RATES TO THE CITY.

Because of this huge debt to the City by the local authorities, the councils have to continually shove the rents up in order to clear these debts for that year. The Housing Finance Bill is designed to get conformity of rent increases in order that the financiers receive their interest on time.

With this in mind they go about reorganising the rent system. To those that invest in housing, the Housing Finance Bill means quick returns, which are important to the capitalist because of growing 'inflation'. To implement this Act, there has to be a lot of groundwork done by the government. First a splitting campaign has to be organised. This is achieved by telling the people that most tenants are not paying the 'economic rent' and should be paying more to help the less fortunate. This of course has the immediate reaction of getting a section of tenants to straight away organise against the Bill.

These constitute the advanced section of the tenants.

while those on low wages are hood-winked by the smooth overtones from the powers-that-be (not all, of course), this has the effect of splitting the tenants' movement. In fact one has to be completely destitute to get any joy from the so-called 'Rebate System'.

How Will The Act Work?

First of all, the tenants will get an 'evaluation officer' in their houses to assess the property. He will look for any alteration to the house; partitions, book-cases, built-in shelves, etc. He will also take into account the condition of the garden, in short, any excuse to up the rent.

Why The Housing Finance Bill?

He will be around every six months to re-assess the property and refusal to allow him to enter any property will mean for a tenant a very heavy fine or imprisonment.

If there is more than one wage earner in the household, then the rent will be determined on who earns the biggest wage. If a son or daughter, for instance, earns more than the tenant himself, then the rent is adjusted to that son or daughter's wage and it is the gross wage which is taken into account, not the take home pay.

The rent rebate system that is dangled in front of every tenant's face like a ripe carrot is nothing else than an insult, as tenants know themselves, and excite everyone's suspicion.

Many remember still the hated 'means test' of the thirties, of which the rebate system is the off-spring. But it is still thought by many younger tenants to be their way out of rising rents. They honestly believe that

they will pay less instead of more by applying for a rebate. It must be patiently explained to tenants that their rent will still rise, regardless. They will still have to pay the annual 50p increase and fight like hell to keep any rebate which they do win.

To get any rebate at all, one has to be earning less than £13 a week gross and be the only wage earner in the house.

So far we have only dealt with the council tenants. What of the private tenants? This section of tenants, mainly concentrated in the big cities, are the most exploited. They endure the worst conditions and highest rents.

With the landlord looking for any excuse to have his tenant's 'shirt off', he treats this Bill as his passport to more cash in his coffers. If a tenant goes to the rent tribunal complaining that his rent is too high, a surveyor calls on him in his flat. If the surveyor thinks it's worth more, he will pass that information on to the landlord. The landlord, being a public-minded citizen, will straight away up the rent, but if the surveyor decides that the rent is too high, the landlord will throw his tenants out on the street.

All this is not new to private tenants but under the Bill the occupier has no legal right of appeal because by the time the appeal is heard, the landlord may have a new tenant on his property and 'it is not fair to evict him'. So it's easy for the landlord to do what he likes.

As regards furnished property, he only has to supply a few chairs and a table and it is classed as furnished accommodation.

With the housing problem in the big cities higher than in the rest of the country it can easily be seen that these landlords are going to exploit the Bill to its fullest and of course private tenants have an added disadvantage, they cannot organise en-masse against one landlord like the Council tenants. All over the country Council tenants have only one landlord - the City of London.

Sometimes, Marxist-Leninists have held that council housing is outside the operation of market forces. They have believed that the 'regulation' and 'control' of council rents takes it outside the sphere of profitable capitalist operations. This

is the common belief of all social democrats. This is just not true. State involvement merely legalises and normalises the excesses of landlords and financiers.

The Housing Finance Bill is another turn upwards in the spiral of increasing exploitation of the working class. This is a continuation of the previous trend towards a more and more chronic housing problem for the workers. It must be resisted by the united efforts of the working class in trade unions and tenants' associations. This struggle must have the clarity to understand that the social democrats are no alternative to the Tories in developing the struggle for decent homes.

Continued from page 26

demagogues establish a mass base amongst sections of the working class.

For the reasons stated we think that for some time to come the workers employed in the biggest monopoly enterprises will, by continued militancy, be able to maintain or improve their living standards and as long as this is possible there is unlikely to be much potential for a growth in mass revolutionary consciousness amongst them.

The intensity of work and the tying of workers to the speed of the machine or assembly line is undoubtedly much greater in those enterprises, but the relatively high wages will always attract a sufficient number of young workers who will be able to protect their standards by militancy alone for perhaps ten years of their working life before being compelled to look for a less exhausting job.

In the final analysis it is the big battalions which will play a decisive part in

any revolutionary action, but in this article we are primarily concerned with those sections which will in the near future be compelled by force of circumstances to seek solutions which cannot be obtained within the present system.

There are many factors to be taken into consideration, but on the whole we feel that the economic pressure on the workers in the smaller non-monopoly enterprises will tend to make this section more likely to seek solutions outside the present system, but we should not assume that they will automatically opt for a revolutionary alternative in the short term.

We conclude by emphasising that the purpose of this article is to stimulate investigation into contradictions within the industrial working class, not merely for the purpose of generating an academic discussion, but expressly in order to assist the development of a revolutionary consciousness within the class.

LETTERS

Comrades,

Having just read The Marxist for the first time it came over to me as a refreshing, even exciting experience. The need for a journal aimed at reaching the working class on the factory floor and in the streets is so urgent that it does not need justification. However, some criticism of the general outlay and vocabulary used, if constructive, I believe is needed.

Firstly I realise the fact that as the Marxist represents a viewpoint that should be intended to educate the working class on the true goals of Socialism and the way to adopt Socialist principles under the present system, problems of finance and interpretation must arise.

These must not be allowed to mist over the fact that the working class in general require something that is attractive and easy to understand. Until the proletariat have achieved a level of understanding Marxist-Leninism and realise how the capitalists are preventing this, then it is pointless to go into intricate details and elongated vocabulary.

I take as an example your article on dia-

lectics. This would have had to be read several times with the aid of a dictionary in order for the average factory worker to have understood it.

I do not believe that the mass of the working class have yet reached the stage when they are prepared to do this.

What I would like to see are articles describing present political situations and socialist solutions that could be designed in such a way as to encourage discussion on the factory floor. Until the working class are supplied with literature that persuades us to reason between ourselves then further advances along the road to Socialism are restricted.

Perhaps I could suggest that the Editorial Committee read two chapters of Tressell's "Ragged Trousered Philanthropists" - The Ublong and The Great Oration. These are brilliantly executed discussions that bring over the message simply and show great enlightenment.

All the success for the future. I shall continue to read The Marxist and pass the copy on for discussion with my comrades.

Yours fraternally,
David S. King,
High Wycombe,
Bucks.