

are prepared to, Communists can help to persuade scientists (including natural scientists, including mathematicians) of its truth. Because all scientific knowledge really is the result of a process without any subject or goal. This is undoubtedly a Thesis which is difficult to understand. But it gives a very important insight, not only into scientific work but also into the political struggle.

Yes, it has both scientific and political consequences.

You will remember the definition of philosophy which I proposed: philosophy is, in the last instance, class struggle in the field of theory.

If philosophy is *class struggle* in the field of

theory, it is political. And it has political effects. But if it is class struggle in the field of *theory*, it has theoretical effects, both in the sciences and in certain ideologies. It also of course has effects in all the other fields of human activity, from the "struggle for production" (Mao) to art, etc.

But I cannot deal with everything here. I will just say that, as class struggle in the field of theory, philosophy has two main effects: in politics *and* in the sciences, in political practice *and* in scientific practice. All Communists know that, or ought to know it, because Marxism-Leninism has never ceased to repeat it and to argue for it.

(Part II will appear in the November issue).

Discussion Contribution on:

Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

Bert Ramelson

Bill Warren is entitled to be critical of *The British Road to Socialism*. But as a persistent critic over the years it is really high time that he confined his criticism to what is contained in the BRS and not to Aunt Sallies—the creation of his own highly imaginative interpretation of what the BRS means.

If he is to lay any claims to being a Marxist it is also high time that he starts with objective reality in drawing his conclusions and does not distort facts to fit his own preconceived conclusions. It would also help if he used the same criteria for the testing of the credibility and viability of all concepts, not use certain yardsticks when it suits him and discard them when it doesn't.

He starts his criticism with what he apparently considers the most powerful argument, namely the lack of success by our party in the electoral field.

This argument is not only shallow and superficial but, presumably because it doesn't suit his case, Bill Warren fails to apply this criterion on a world scale.

If the test of the correctness of our strategy is electoral gains, and as Warren throughout his criticism of the BRS argues the case on a world scale or at least as a misconceived and "reformist strategy" in the industrially developed countries, then presumably the electoral gains in France, Italy and Japan by the Communist Parties in those countries adopting a similar strategy must be proof

positive of the correctness of this strategy.

Nor is there any shortage of "leftist groups" who are critical of the BRS for the same reason as Bill Warren in all industrially developed countries including Britain. Some of them participate in elections to governmental institutions and all in elections within the trade union movement.

As their votes to governmental representative bodies are even more "miserable" than ours, and whereas we considerably increased our support within the trade union movement, the anti-BRS strategists are almost entirely ignored by the workers in elections whether it is for lay officials such as shop stewards or full time officials, then presumably, by the same token, Bill Warren's strategy must be false.

No Marxist would, of course, consider the test of the correctness of a strategy the rapidity with which the masses accept it and follow it. If that were the test then social democratic strategy and opportunism would seem to be the correct strategy, for over the years they certainly succeeded in winning considerable followings in the advanced industrial countries. Equally, if that were the criterion, Marxist strategy (even if you excluded the 20 years since the BRS was published) must be wrong for it has been advocated for nearly a century and by communist parties for 30 years between 1920 and 1950.

Merely to state these facts is to show how absurd a test it is.

But then to add, as Bill Warren does “. . . so that continued failure of the working class to follow Communist leadership must necessarily imply that the central link of the entire strategic chain is missing” shows either his total ignorance of what has been happening in the labour movement, or a wilful blindness to events which prove his “preconceived theory” wrong.

Not only have large numbers of workers elected Communists and their allies to key positions both lay and full time in the trade unions, but many of the policies Communists have been advocating have been adopted by a majority of the trade unions and by the Trades Union Congress itself. That goes for foreign as well as for home policy including the rejection of “incomes policy”, of which until recently Bill Warren was a fervent supporter.

Has Bill Warren heard of the successful struggle of the UCS under the leadership of Communists, and that literally hundreds of thousands of workers have followed the example in a revolutionary transformed fight for the “right to work”, to use but one example?

Confrontation with the State

Far from the BRS and our Party wishing to “shrink from the necessity, of a clash with the state machine” as is hinted by Bill Warren, it was our Party at its last Congress that agitated for, and has since helped to bring about a confrontation with the State and its institutions. It was our Party’s strategy for the need to win allies and combine extra-parliamentary with parliamentary struggle—the kernel of the BRS—that brought about the sort of confrontation that compelled the State to release the Pentonville Five when faced by an escalating general strike from below which compelled the General Council to call an official 1-day General Strike. It is possible that Bill Warren is the only person in Britain who is not aware that a key figure in this—Bernie Steer—is a Communist and that this strategy was outlined by our EC two years ago and called for on June 10 by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions—a body continuously criticised by the anti-BRS groups as reformist but fortunately containing experienced Communists on its leading body.

Of course the strikes against the Industrial Relations Act are political, as in a sense every wage strike against a Government-imposed norm is political. But it also has its economic side. Which side is stressed at a given time depends on many circumstances, an important factor of which is what will move workers into action. For it is when workers are in action that they quickly draw political conclusions—much more quickly than from what may

appear to them abstract slogans.

It is this same Hugh Scanlon, the “left” Bill Warren sneers at, who was the first trade union leader to win his union, the AUEW, to decide on a national strike of its 1½ million workers against the State’s imprisonment of the Pentonville Five and who successfully moved the General Strike resolution in the General Council.

Without allies like him the Socialist revolution in Britain will remain an empty slogan.

How can one explain Bill Warren’s further gem:

“. . . despite all this, there has been no shift to the left within the Labour Party. If trade-unionists have increasingly elected left-wingers, this is only to a minor extent the result of Communist Party strategy (or activity). It remains in any case an ‘economist’ phenomenon, and above all reflects the profound social forces stimulated and released by the continuing inflation of postwar capitalism. If there had been no Communist Party, workers would still be electing militants in the trade unions and on the shop-floor and their *political* attitudes would be unchanged. It is a measure of the Communist strategy that insofar as it has had success, it has been in organising workers on purely economic issues without any significant political content.”

I suggest it can only be explained by his desperation to prove the BRS wrong, and if to do that means ignoring the facts and throwing Marxism overboard, well so much the worse for the facts and Marxism.

To say that the Labour Party has not moved sufficiently to the left or that insufficient changes in the leadership of the Labour Party have taken place is one thing, but to say that the Labour Party hasn’t moved to the left boggles the imagination.

Is Bill Warren aware that the Labour Party Conference and EC, and, as a consequence, the Parliamentary Labour Party, has voted against the Industrial Relations Act, against the present proposals for entry to the EEC, against the Housing Finance Bill, is pledged to unconditional repeal of the Industrial Relations Act, has changed its policy on Vietnam and supported the UCS? It’s far from a revolutionary position, but to fail to see it as a shift to the left and above all the forces and the movement which brought it about, shows Bill Warren’s total inability to understand the strategy of the BRS.

Spontaneity

The logic of his remarks that the only changes in the trade union movement are of an economic character and would have taken place without the Communists is that there really is no need for an organised revolutionary party, and is in line with the theory of “spontaneity” advocated by those on the left incapable of founding a stable, disciplined Marxist organisation and not all that far from

Enoch Powell's anti-trade union argument that the present level of wages is not due to militancy or trade unionism but the state of the labour market, and would have been the same if there had been no trade unions at all. To say nothing of the contradiction to his own argument earlier when it suited him, that the actions against the Industrial Relations Act were *political* and not economic.

Then there is the Aunt Sally that the BRS deviates from Lenin's concept of the need to smash the bourgeois State and replace it by a working class state, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

The BRS makes it abundantly clear that the state that will be created will be a fundamentally different state from the bourgeois state. Surely the "smashing" of the bourgeois state was never intended by Lenin to be the literal smashing of bricks and mortar, or even all the institutions. A representative of the working class as Chief Constable as well as his main colleagues coming from the same class, even if they occupy the same skyscraper which houses Scotland Yard, is a smashing of the State.

Working class judges and Army officers replacing the present personnel is a smashing of the bourgeois State—though the institutions of the police, judiciary and army are retained but are now instruments of the working class and their allies instead of the property-owning class.

All this is spelled out in plain English in BRS—so the continuous return to the suggestion that somehow the BRS deviates from Lenin's concept of the role of the State is hard to explain.

Then there is his criticism that it is wrong in an advanced country to lay too much stress on the fight for democracy and the importance of Parliament as the "highest form of representative power".

This is really the Achilles Heel of the critics of the BRS. It is their failure to understand the nature of democracy and the role it occupies in the thinking and action of the working class movement and the magnetic force it has to attract allies, that is really responsible for their inability to advance a strategy capable of moving the masses into action and struggle, the "*sine qua non*" of any revolutionary development.

The British working class challenged the British state and were preparing for the first time a political General Strike because their conception of democracy and the abuse by the ruling class of Parliament was much more basic and sophisticated than Bill Warren gives them credit for. They were not taken in by the argument that "the law must be obeyed". They were quite capable of distinguishing between the various categories of laws.

The right to organise into free trade unions and to strike is, in their eyes, a basic democratic right won in struggle. The abuse of Parliament to deprive them of it moved them into action on an unpre-

cedented scale, involving tens of thousands who are far from convinced Socialists. In the course of this struggle on a *democratic* issue, many have learned important political lessons, including the nature of the State. A strategy that leads to that sort of involvement of masses of workers and the support for them by considerable strata of the non-proletariat, far from being reformist is the very essence of a revolutionary strategy. This was the strategy advocated by our Party, to a considerable extent brought to fruition by Party activists and is at the very heart of the strategy envisaged by the BRS.

Parliament is the institution of representative government historically developed in this country. At various times in our history it has been used as an instrument of class power on behalf of the particular ruling class. It is our intention that it should be used as the instrument of power of the working class and its allies in a Socialist Britain. It is unique in world institutions in that in theory it is all-powerful, ruling over the judiciary and the executive. Of course its powers can be eroded to suit the purposes of the ruling class.

The Soviets were elected organs and the first elected Soviets had a social democratic majority—only when their composition changed by new elections did they become the revolutionary instrument that changed society in Russia. There's no basic law except the vigilance of the people that excludes absolutely the erosion of power of Soviets or any other institution drawn up in the course of a revolutionary transformation of society.

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