

The stuff of politics

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We have a continuing national saga about the need to bring about stability, to curb inflation and to achieve, lo and behold, the prosperity just around the corner. In the State communist countries, the equivalent saga is about “achieving socialism” while the fascist countries had the “fatherland in danger”. All, however, are at one when it comes to the nitty-gritty – the mugs need to work harder and go without, and yet it is their slackness or greed – as opposed to that of the hard-working industrious and self-sacrificing leadership – that brings about all the problems. All politicians feel ‘the people do not deserve us’ and for once they are not lying!

In the State communist countries the ruling clique has perpetuated an enormous con trick that the working class is in fact the ruling class, that the two are synonymous, and only unknown wreckers at home and notorious class enemies abroad would say otherwise. In the capitalist countries, the equivalent myth is that the middle-class is really a working-class, that the workers are middle-class, that there is no upper-class and that the workers’ representatives are the real rulers ... it is a more confused interpretation but the reasoning behind the con trick is not at all confused: it sets out to confuse.

Nobody can understand the stuff of politics unless they talk in terms of class and power relationships. There are attitudes and ways of living and behaviour which affect people in no matter what sort of society they live, which may be more or less authoritarian according to the nature of the society; but the main facts of the way one lives, how the economy is controlled, whether there is a greater or lesser degree of dictatorship, the degree of economic prosperity, is all dependent upon class relationships or who wields the power and how they wield it.

There is a difference between State communism and capitalism in that, in the first, the people in power are there by virtue of their elected or appointed (or self taken) positions, and they do not depend upon the profits of the economic system. In capitalism, while the government is elected or appointed (or self taken) but the competitive economic system means the domination of classes because of their profits.

There is little to choose between State communism and modern capitalism in forms of exploitation; the sole difference that is always stressed by the pro-capitalists are the degrees of tolerance allowed. This to some extent arises from the system: If the workers seize a factory, no State Commissar would hesitate to blow them from the face of the earth. In capitalist society, the army would be faced by frantic pleas from the owner to spare his lovely profit-making factory. The concern with profits runs right through the capitalist society and introduces an element of corruption which is absent in State communism; but corruption is the only way in which tyranny is mitigated.

Labour or Tory

In British politics today we are not asked to choose between State communism and Individual capitalism as, for instance, in French or Italian politics – not that either, in fact, is obtained or that, as a result of any election they may have, the system is any different. The British scene differs from many others in the confrontation between (Fabian) Socialism and the hotchpotch of Conservatism (part Keynesian, part individualistic). Both parties use the same national saga but introduce an array of side-issues to stress their divergencies. In reality, the Labour Party has no socialist ideas at all, and relies on a sort of diluted Keynesian approach (State intervention

the cure-all) and the Conservative Party has abandoned its *laissez-faire* individualism which represents its ideal for a bastardised Welfare State-ism. It likes to think of itself as libertarian in its approach to business – as little State intervention as possible *there* – but authoritarian in regard to the workers (bash the strikers) and with force as a cure-all for the crimes of present-day society. Flog 'em, hang 'em, conscript 'em, send 'em back. The Labour Party usually takes the opposite point of view – which is thought of as left-wing (though not always), and this helps them maintain the air of Punch-and-Judy shows about parliamentary politics.

In reality, though the Labour Party still retains some class nature in its appeal – and those who deny it must ask themselves what constitutes a safe seat, why Bournemouth is a Tory 'safe seat' and Tower Hamlets a Labour – it has lost all class nature in its representation. It has receded to the nineteenth century position of the Liberal Party in politics which dominates the parliamentary scene corresponding to the old Whigs. The Whigs, in opposition to the Tory monopoly of government, put forward liberal ideas, and propositions thought of as progressive, though they were solidly aristocratic and elitist. There is now a Whiggism based not on "birth," a discredited notion unless it has money to go with it, but on intellect. The intellectual Whigs are divorced from the people but they offer them – kindly, without doubt – liberal measures to placate them, or sometimes popular ideas to excite them, it being understood that they have no intention of yielding their power to anyone else. Members of Parliament take their cue from the old Whig notion that they are representatives and not delegates.

The Fascist Alternative

Fascism is the last hope of a ruling class to deflect the class struggle by glorifying nationalism or patriotism. It normally seeks to leapfrog into power by attacking first one unpopular minority, for which – it is hoped – few will intervene, and then another, and another – until finally it seems invincible.

The essential fact of fascism is having a set of determined men wanting to rule on behalf of the capitalist class, and being able to offer the ruling class a set of thugs that are able to smash the workers' organisations. While the orthodox democratic parties and especially the Labour Party can do this without fuss or fireworks there is no place for fascism. In order to render social revolution "obsolete", fascism must turn to racialism or nationalism and the price is too high for a capitalist class to pay if it can prevent the workers' associations taking over the places of work by other means.

Why Not Anarchism?

A survey of the dreary wastes of politics makes one wonder why Anarchism is not immediately accepted by all. The folly and waste of government is so great, the worship of the State – even when disguised in its fancy dress of nationalism, or patriotism – so transparently a fraud, that the Anarchist case would seem to be one immediately acceptable, and the reason for its being so maligned and traduced, and ultimately actively persecuted, by governments, so apparent.

When the working class first began organising itself, it was usually Anarchism, or a socialism barely distinguishable, that was its declared goal. Only active persecution, or in some cases political persuasion and infiltration by the New Whiggery of Fabianism, altered that; and the working

class turned to Statism disguised as socialism, or as patriotism, or both together. Now that they have all failed Anarchism is left as the only logical cause.

But if people as a whole are reluctant to embrace it, it is because they have been so cruelly misled by politicians, for so long that even the very words 'working class revolution' seem redolent of authority or unsocial-ism; or because they have bitter memories of how what the politicians could not get by force, they got by fraud. There is a real fear of being out on a limb, even by those who do not understand the role of a political police.

This accounts for the quasi-anarchism that is nowadays so popular, that seeks to abandon trying to take over the means of life and opt for making the most of spare time left to us by the modern State which can be as much as the whole week if one plays one's social security cards right..

But changes in personal values and alterations in life style will no more affect power and profit than changes in fashion. Everything in capitalist society will stand or fall by the criterion of private profit; every advance in personal freedom will always be at the mercy of whoever happen to control the State machinery in any society; the impersonal machine controlling the State will ultimately decide whether we live or die. Unless we pit against it the one thing that still gives us strength – the muscle of our labour.

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