

Martin Jacques writes: With this issue readers will find a letter of appeal in connection with the expansion plans of Marx House. These have been made possible mainly because of the acquisition of a large part of James Klugmann's library collection and involve the occupation of a new wing of Marx House. This expansion marks an important new stage in the development of Marx House and we hope readers will respond favourably to the appeal.

BSSRS — 10 Years On

Fred Steward writes: The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science recently celebrated its tenth birthday with a special meeting in London. The speakers ranged from academic scientists to a trade unionist in high-technology industry. Joseph Needham, author of the monumental study on science and civilisation in China, reminisced about the radical scientists of the 1930s while Mike Cooley of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee vividly explored the implications of the workers' Corporate Plan. The presence of these two speakers symbolised the wide range of concerns, theoretical and practical, which have occupied BSSRS during its first ten years.

The origins of BSSRS were traced by Jonathan Rosenhead to the concern over the military use of science in the Vietnam war but subsequent interests became much more diverse. Although at first a number of eminent members of the scientific establishment were involved with BSSRS most of these withdrew as the organisation adopted a more activist approach in the early 1970s. This was accompanied by a shift in analysis from an emphasis of individual responsibility for the use or abuse of science to a stress on the systematic direction of science by capitalism. Dot Griffiths outlined the spectrum of issues on which working groups are currently engaged which include hazards

at work, microprocessors, sociobiology, genetic engineering and women in science.

The first of these has been highly successful in practical terms with local groups around the country actively involved with trade unionists in fighting industrial risks to health. The close relationship which has been developed between scientists and workers is an important political advance which is in the process of being extended to other areas such as the social implications of microelectronics.

On the other hand a continuing problem is that although these links have been strengthened, the growth of the actual base of BSSRS among working scientists, in academic, industrial and government laboratories, has not advanced at the same pace. The speakers from the BSSRS National Committee acknowledged a need for the organisation to relate more effectively to students, and to academic and industrial scientists. It was suggested that the Conservative Government's cuts in public expenditure created a new need for BSSRS to align itself with other scientists and technologists in struggle.

A pressing problem for BSSRS is how to integrate work on such issues with its critique of the social practice of science. Maurice Wilkins considered that doing science was at the basis of a 'materialistic, exploitative and fragmenting society' while another speaker criticised the current nature of science as 'hierarchical, elitist, sexist and racist'.

The development of a strategy which seeks both to transform the nature of science as well as to articulate its social value is the challenge that faces BSSRS in the 1980s.

Culture and Politics Conference

James Donald writes: The past decade has witnessed the growth of a range of 'cultural struggles' (feminist politics, anti-racist movements, radical aesthetic projects) which

have called into question traditional conceptions of politics. A parallel growth of cultural theory has meant that strands of Marxist thought have been given a new currency in British academic and intellectual debates. The two developments have tended to remain separated, however: the term 'culture' has been defined in contradictory ways and fitted into often mutually antagonistic political strategies. This conference, organised by the Society for Education in Film and Television will therefore attempt to untangle some of the complexities of 'culture', 'politics' and their articulation in different practices and institutions; it will also consider how to respond to the narrowing of spaces for 'cultural work' within the terrain of the State.

Speakers will include Francis Mulhern, Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, Ian Connell, Simon Frith, Jim Grealy and Jean Radford. It will be held at the Polytechnic of Central London on 9-10 February. For more information and application forms contact: SEFT, 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL (01-734 5455/3211).

Bulletin on Social Policy

Chris Phillipson writes: Issue No 4 of Bulletin on Social Policy contains book reviews and social commentaries on the cuts and socialists in social work. The *Bulletin* is a socialist journal aimed at all those working or interested in the fields of social services, education and health. Annual subscription to the Bulletin costs £2 (£1.50 for those with little or no income). Single issues 60p. Send orders to 89 Mitchell St, Rochdale, Lanes OL12 6SH.

Erratum

December 79, p16, should have read: 'In supporting democratic organisations such as the Liaison Committee . . .'

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