

## ***LETTER TO OUR READERS***

Very slowly, and sometimes with more sound than substance, it does seem that a "new left" is coming into being in this country. As yet it has neither a coherent centre nor any clear policies; it's still a mood rather than a movement. It's made up of the most diverse elements: members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: veteran left-wingers from the unions and "Tribune" readers: young people shocked by the Notting Hill riots: Victory for Socialism supporters: anti-Establishment crusaders from the universities: dissident Communists, striking new roots in the labour movement. It stretches from G. D. H. Cole to John Homer, and from Bill Jones, the busmen's leader, to Lindsay Anderson, film-maker and critic.

It's a mood still, and we like it that way. We don't want to see it "jell" too soon into some new nice tight faction with demi-god leaders and a water-tight orthodoxy. It isn't a sloppy mood — people are very clear on some things and sharp and effective in their actions: opposition to nuclear war, racial or class oppression, corrupt "playing at politics," jingoism, stuffy over-bred culture. They are much less clear on a whole range of subjects which socialists once thought were beyond dispute: the problems of bureaucracy; of controlling the controllers of nationalised industries: wages policy: workers' control: the character of Soviet society: the shape of the socialist State and the character of "the transition" in Britain: how to displace money from power in the nation's cultural life and bring the mass media under the control of healthy indigenous and democratic forces. It's a mood which affirms a confident humanist outlook, while breaking sharply with the brutal platitudes of power and expediency which have gone by the name of "Marxism,"

We don't want to see it "jell"; the mood wants to reach out to tens of thousands more people before it takes any definitive form. But, at the same time, we don't want to see it dissipated for lack of means of expression and forms of self-propagation; nor do we want it to remain a largely intellectual movement, however lively, centering on the U.L.R. Club in London.

We understand the impatience of some left-wing veterans (old and young) who think the New Reasoner is hedging or "aloof" because it does not have every quarter some thundering great hufnng-and-pufng The-Task-For-Marxists-Is-Clear editorial, giving' our readers their action stations for the next three months. But, dammit, we are part of this mood ourselves. If you haven't found out already, we'll tell you two editorial secrets. 1. We don't know all the answers ourselves. 2. Those we do know we don't agree about.

In case this seems too amateurish, and World Marxist Review can find nothing in our brand of Mainenemy-Revisionism to grind its Marxist-Leninist teeth about in sixteen different languages, we would add; 1. We are quite clear and united on our opinion of that outfit. 2. We are working overtime on the other questions. 3. We hope to get out some kind of collective manifesto in a few months time.

Meanwhile, how to keep the mood alive, effective and spreading outwards? We don't think there is any one single organisational answer; and anyone who thinks that the "new left" can or ought to be immediately identified with one body, such as "Victory for Socialism, doesn't understand what is happening. You might get most of the readers of this journal into V for S, but it certainly isn't big enough to hold the Royal Court Theatre and we doubt whether it is big enough to hold Mr. Christopher Logue. Clearly, in effective political terms the "new left" must tie in with the Labour Party left. But people in the "new left" are highly suspicious of professional politics – even of some V for S politicians. Some of the reasons they give are precious or purist; some are the result of too little (or too much) experience; and some of the reasons are wholly good. They are not going to sweat their guts out for petty constitutional or parliamentary manoeuvres. They want (and this is especially true of the young people) to feel that a part of the movement is their own, where they can discuss what they like and on occasions act on their own initiative, without waiting for some cumbersome T.U.C.-Transport House committee to give a ponderous say-so. They want to discuss fundamental questions. They want to act on the questions of quantitative educational provision discussed by Peter Ibbotson in this number: but they want also to discuss the quality of education (the class-orientation, the place of the humanities, the values implicit in socialist educational theory). They want to act against slums and rack-renting, but they also want to discuss the long-term problems of building socialist cities and communities. Any attempt to press all these people at once into some new card-holding contingent will defeat its own ends. If our sense of urgency at the immediate range of problems leads us to demand action at the expense of the longer-term, fundamental discussions, we will destroy the spirit of the new left. The problem is to hold the two things together.

How is it to be done? Probably in a number of ways. We must get abroad a spirit of unity: we may not all be in the same detachment, but we are all going the same way. Apart from the Campaign, the things which are most likely to unite people will be periodicals and centres for socialist discussion; perhaps a movement like the Left Book Clubs: perhaps something more diverse – a V for S branch here, a U.L.R. Club there, a "Tribune" group here and a socialist discussion group there. And we must have more machinery for conferences and schools, for special kinds of cultural and educational work, for exhibitions and international contacts. All this takes time to build. (We have already opened discussions with U.L.R. on the question of joint actions on these lines and we have a number of plans). Do we need some new socialist publications and educational society, to co-ordinate and consolidate existing activities? We would like the views of readers on the best form which all this activity should take. Contributions (try to keep within 1,000 words) are invited for a forum in our next number. By October 20th please.

<sup>1</sup> If this "new left" is to develop, we must keep journals alive; there must be places for analysis, discussion, international information.

And our backs are against the wall. We have never told you quite how tough it has been to keep going during the past 18 months. We left it to your imagination. As usual, a few people at once assumed that we had private incomes, secretaries, and a subsidy from the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

Well, we haven't. If we had some capital, secretarial help, and organised support, we could expand fast. But without these things we are in real difficulty.

At one point we discussed a merger with U.L.R. Discussions were fruitful and various forms of co-operation are going ahead, but both editorial boards were against a merger on the grounds that the journals have distinct characters and different functions, they run alongside each other without much overlap or competition, and by this division of labour we get the result of seven numbers per annum. The door has not been closed to further discussion (as they say when they load the guns) but that's where we left it.

If you agree we should go on, we ask you to respond to the Appeal on our back cover. (And thank you, once again, those readers who have sent us donations – ranging from £25 to 2/6d. – this quarter).

Finally, we love U.L.R., but we happen to know that some of our richer readers have given oodles of money to that coffee-house whose hungry gorge has already next to beggared the "new left." Now the beastly thing is open, can we put in a claim?

All the same, we're glad the coffee-house (7 Carlisle Street, Soho Square) is now open. It's a first-rate idea, and we hope readers will use it. Also, we shall use it ourselves for a series of monthly London discussion meetings: all readers are welcome. The first meeting will be on Friday, October 10th, 7-45, on "Socialists and the Campaign." The speakers will be Mervyn Jones and Dr. D. G. Arnott. The second, on November 14th, on "Socialists and the Labour Party," and Ralph Miliband and John Rex will lead a discussion on their articles in this number. Please don't expect any other notice. Please don't forget.

Readers "down under" have not yet got over the shock when in our third number we implied that Australia and Tasmania were different countries. Well, looking at the map we refuse to retract; if they are too separate countries they ought to be. We will always be willing to carry material in support of militant Tasmanian nationalism. Meanwhile, can we give a special recommendation to readers down there (or interested in Australian affairs and socialist discussion in general) to get hold of the excellent independent Australian socialist review, "Outlook": every two months at 2/- each or 12/- for the year, from the Editor, Box 368, Haymarket, Sydney, Australia.

Turning the globe, we recommend an impressive new monthly — " an independent monthly forum " — in India, entitled "The Contemporary": positive and undidactic in tone, it promises to serve as some kind of crossroads for Soviet and Western socialist thought. It is 15/- a year from 166 North Avenue, New Delhi.

And can we jog your memory about Paul Hogarth's drawings of South Africa and Rhodesia, now published by Dennis Dobson, under the title " People Like Us " ? It includes some of the drawings we published in our second number, and a great many more, of equal quality.

Some time ago that workers' control piece got shunted into a siding (we hope to get it out for our 8th number), but Ken Alexander and John Hughes have now come up with an impressive and detailed analysis of Wages Policy, with a set of constructive proposals of utmost importance to trade unionists and socialists. This will be published jointly by N.R. and U.L.R., as a 20,000 word pamphlet, probably in November. We can't yet give you exact details of price, etc.

This is the first joint U.L.R./N.R. publishing venture: its success depends upon the immediate active response of the readers of both journals. So please watch out for adverts or circulars, and order a bulk supply promptly and arrange discussions around it in the trade union movement. If this is a success, then the "new left" will be beginning to get somewhere.

It is early to start thinking of Christmas: but why not help our circulation drive, and give an unusual gift, by sending an annual N.R. subscription to friends? Our next number will be out early in December; we are getting browned off with announcing contents in advance, since events come along and change our plans. But No. 7 should be a number with a literary theme; more stories and poems (" tracts " to Mr. Wain), an important essay on Wordsworth by Victor Kiernan, the second part of Edward Thompson's " Agency and Choice," some Gramsci letters, material on colonial questions and the international scene, a special section on " revisionism," and material on English labour history. We'll see what we can get in.

Most of the contributors to this number are already known to you, or are introduced in the text. **John Berger**, 'New Statesman' art critic, has a novel - 'A Painter of Our Time' - due for publication this autumn. **Peter Ibbotson** is Secretary of the National Association of Labour Teachers. **David Koss** works in the foreign department of the 'Daily Herald,' and is a frequent contributor to 'France-Observateur' and 'Tribune.' **Dora Scarlett** lived in Budapest and worked for the Hungarian radio until the rising; now in London, she is preparing an article for us on the problem of bureaucracy in socialist society.