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## *The Transition to The Transition*

'Men make their own history, but not just as they please. They do not choose circumstances for themselves, but have to work upon circumstances as they find them, have to fashion the material handed down by the past.'  
Karl Marx

This was originally intended to be an essay on the problems of the transition to socialism in Britain. On reflection, the conviction has grown upon me that such an essay, in our present circumstances, must consist of speculations unanchored to present day reality and involve a great deal too much crystal-gazing. Questions such as that of 'capitalist resistance' to socialist change, and what to do about it, are interesting and important; but they are not more urgently relevant than the question of the Labour Party's resistance to it. The problem is not the transition to socialism in Britain; it is, in any realistic and unrhetoical perspective, the transition, or the prospects and tasks for\* socialists in Britain in the short and middle range future. Anyone more interested in the long range had better consult a *voyante*.

### *I. The Labour Party and Capitalist Change.*

Everybody knows there is going to be another Labour Government sooner or later, possibly sooner. But no one gets very worked up about it. No one in the Labour movement seriously believes that it is going to mean really important changes in Britain's social and economic structure or a fundamental reappraisal of Britain's posture in the world. And there cannot be many Tories who really fear that it will threaten civilisation as we know it.

This cool anticipation of another Labour Government on the part of Tories is not new: they have always been much less worried about such episodes than they have allowed to appear in public. Apocalyptic warnings of the sombre fate which must befall this country in the event of a Labour Government's accession to office have been issued at every General Election since Labour became a major political contender. This forms part of the expected ritual of politics. It is hardly taken seriously nowadays even by timorous old ladies with modest Post Office savings.

On the other hand, the marked degree of soberness with which most people in the Labour movement contemplate an eventual Labour victory is more striking, and contrasts dramatically with the

expectations which preceded the victory of 1945. Party activists will, quite likely, work hard for Labour's return. But they will not expect great things from its achievement of office.

Such scepticism is hardly surprising when one looks at Labour's present leaders or at its announced programme. Even mescaline wouldn't make those leaders look or sound like the apostles of a new dispensation, or like eager travellers straining to set out on an adventurous journey. They seem more like men oppressed by the steepness of the road, the obstacles on the way, the difficulties ahead, the need for extreme caution. They appear short of breath in anticipation. It is difficult to believe that they have very good lungs.

As to the studies in evasion which the Labour Party has been issuing from time to time under the name of policy pamphlets, they fully illustrate how far the Party has now moved from the aim it first proclaimed in 1918, and which it has never officially repudiated, of establishing a socialist society 'upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service'.

Nor do the pronouncements of the parliamentary leaders suggest an unambiguous will to contribute *in practice* to the termination of the international civil war which defines such a large part of the reality of our times.

This is a sombre though not, I think, an overdrawn picture; so sombre that many people in the Labour movement who think it true are tempted into a search for scapegoats. The Left has always been prone to a demonological interpretation of history and it is now fashionable among frustrated socialists to attribute Labour's condition to the poverty of its leadership. The leadership is deplorable. But this is not the whole story, nor even the main part of it. Leaders tend to reflect tendencies, even though they often distort them. If they did not reflect tendencies, they would cease to be leaders. There isn't much to be gained, save by political hacks, from a narrow concentration of attention on the failings and attributes of this or that Labour politician. There are more amusing things to do; certainly more fruitful ones.

Nor is it sufficient to deplore the renunciation of socialism implicit in Labour's announced programme; or even to present - though this is certainly necessary - detailed alternatives to that programme. For the really important point about an abortion like *Industry and Society* is not that it should be seriously advanced as a contribution to a *socialist* programme (Labour leaders, like other men, must have their little jokes), but that it should have been endorsed by a large majority of delegates at the 1957 Labour Party

Conference.

Leaders and programmes are the symptoms of the disease, not the disease itself. That is why we shall not begin to understand what we are up against, and what can be done about it, unless we first try to relate Labour's attitude to wider socio-economic forces which have had a determinant influence in shaping the reality, as distinct from the image, of its role, not only at the present time, but throughout its history. This should not be too difficult to do. After all, the next Labour Government will be the fifth in the series. There is plenty of concrete experience to go on. There is, for instance, much to be learnt from the history of the Labour governments of 1924 and 1929-31, even though, indeed because, most of its members were determined to demonstrate that they could be as good (or as bad) in administering a capitalist society as their Tory counterparts. There is similarly much to be learnt from the history of the Government issued from the General Election of 1950, not least because it was a political blue baby destined for early burial. And there is even more to be learnt from the experience of the Attlee administration of 1945-50, which defined with considerable precision the nature of Labour as a party of government.

The third Labour Government was an amalgam of all kinds of impulses and aspirations that had been bottled up since 1931. Of these, I think it is true to say that the socialist ones were the least powerfully expressed in practice, though they were the most constantly stressed in words. The stress is, of course, not surprising. It was the first time that a majority Labour Government, formally pledged to socialism, had come to power and it was entirely to be expected that its accession to office should have been viewed as the opening of an era of socialist construction, as marking the beginning of a fundamental process of economic and social transformation. And the fact that the Attlee Government took office at the end of the war immeasurably strengthened the hope that, with the military victory over Fascism abroad and the electoral defeat of the Tories at home, a new chapter of British history was about to be written, in red ink.

And indeed, there were changes, in many important directions. The mistake was to see them as part of a general attack on capitalism, as socialist innovations. In fact, Labour's programme and its practice in the post-war years really represented the *continuation*, even though in a much more deliberate and accentuated form (and the qualification is important) of social, economic and administrative changes and tendencies which did not originate with the Labour Party and which are in no way designed to further the achievement of a socialist society.

In many ways, British politics in this century have been dominated by the inescapable need to regulate capitalism by means of marginal collectivism. This is not to say that parties have been agreed either on the required extent or on the desirable bias of marginal collectivism. Anchored as they are to different and divergent class needs, the Labour and Conservative Parties have differed significantly on both counts. But the difference has not been that between the maintenance of 'free enterprise' and the transcendence of capitalism. That has been the image which both parties have sought to give of themselves and of each other for purposes of political warfare. In practice, both have pursued policies primarily designed to *adjust* capitalist enterprise to the logic of its own development.

Marginal collectivism is not a purely British phenomenon. It has been characteristic of all advanced industrial societies, certainly not excluding the most advanced of them all. That is why the argument as to whether enterprise should be 'free' or not becomes increasingly futile with every year that goes by. There will never again be a period of history when that issue will have serious meaning. Marginal collectivism, State intervention, help and control, is now the price which capitalism has learnt it must pay as a condition of its survival as a more or less going economic concern. No advanced industrial system is now capable of operating at even the bare minimum of efficiency without it.

Forces as profound as those which have been at work within capitalist economies throughout this century were bound to find explicit political recognition and the agents of marginal collectivism have in fact been varied in the extreme. They have included the Nazis in Germany and the New Deal Democrats in the United States. This in itself is a sure sign of the inevitability and the universality of the trend, irrespective of specific ideological bias. There is no important political grouping anywhere in the capitalist world which has not been compelled to accept it as one of the basic facts of organised life. And the irreversibility of the trend is well exhibited by the fact that the alternance of parties in power has only involved changes of emphasis in the degree, manner and bias of State intervention, not changes in basic policy.

In Britain, it is the Labour Party which has, throughout its existence, been the most pressing and articulate agent of State intervention. All sections of the Labour movement, from Fabian intellectuals to trade union officials, have been agreed that through State intervention alone was it possible to remedy the uglier consequences of capitalism and to satisfy urgently felt social and economic needs. But many of them also went a good deal further and saw in the gradual but continuous extension of collectivism

through State action the means to transcend the categories of capitalism.

Leaving aside the validity of the Fabian conception of social dynamics implicit in this view, it would seem clear, in the light of historical experience that the Labour Party has remained faithful throughout to its belief in marginal collectivism as a means of *adapting* capitalism but has always run away in practice from any attempt to extend collectivism to the point where it would in fact cease to be compatible with capitalism. Its role, in other words, can be much better understood by reference to A. V. Dicey's *Law and Opinion in England in the 19th Century*, which studies the development of the non-socialist State interventionist tradition, and to J. M. Keynes' *General Theory*, which suggests its contemporary techniques of application, than by reference to Owen, Morris, or the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a view, deeply embedded in Labour thinking, and which largely stems from the experience of capitalism in the 19th century, that *any* kind of State intervention, *any* degree of collectivism, represents an erosion of capitalism and must therefore be treated as an advance to socialism. This is a profoundly mistaken view.

#### //. *The Impact of Marginal Collectivism.*

There are quite a few people in the Labour movement who believe that collectivism in Britain has gone far enough to render obsolete the notion of capitalism itself and who see the 'mixed economy' in which we are supposedly living as constituting a system which, while not yet quite socialist in character, is already partly so, with relatively little of the fuss and bother which always seems to attend experiments in social change among less reasonable peoples.

At the other extreme, there are those who cling to the notion that capitalism is precisely what it was, only more so, and that whatever changes have occurred in its structure and motivations have not affected its fundamental character. I think the second view is a closer approximation to reality than the first, but that both, in differing degrees, are inadequate in their evaluation of what is an extremely complex total situation, with implications that can only be properly discerned by refusing to abstract from this or that particular feature of it. Many of our present difficulties and confusions stem precisely from our inability to disentangle the diverse and contradictory strands which make up that total situation.

Marginal collectivism in advanced capitalist societies has been<sup>a</sup> response to three overriding and related needs: the economic need, the welfare need and the military need. Each of these simply had to be served. Of the three, it is usually the second which is most

often stressed because it is the one which is the most obvious and striking and also because the notion of the 'Welfare State' greatly enhances the view of the State as neutrally responding with indiscriminate impartiality to all pressures, from whatever quarter. The 'Welfare State' is implicitly, and often explicitly set in opposition to the 'Capitalist State' and is deemed to have superseded it, together with the capitalist society it upheld.

In actual fact, the State has responded to the pressure for welfare precisely because that response is economically, socially and politically possible within the framework of capitalism and is indeed desirable for the *maintenance* of that system. One of the facts of our epoch, crucial in its ramified implications, is that acute physical illfare is not capitalism's Siamese twin: it is merely a feature of it in one of its phases of development.

On the other hand, it is important to recognise that welfare collectivism, while it does not destroy the basis of capitalism, i.e., the retention in private ownership of the predominant part of society's means to life, nevertheless does introduce complicating factors in its operation. Over the years, welfare collectivism has dealt a crippling blow to that narrow individualist ethos which was both produced by and which so greatly helped the development of capitalism. It has established minimal criteria of well being whose achievement has been accepted as depending on considerations other than ability to pay. And there is a dynamic about welfare collectivism which makes us all echo Oliver Twist's demand for more; it creates expectations which cannot be denied for long without serious risk.

It may well be said that welfare collectivism has not eliminated poverty, in itself a shifting concept; it may equally be said that the working classes mostly finance the welfare benefits they enjoy. But these benefits are not diminished simply by setting them in an actuarial perspective. Nor can it be doubted that, even within its limitations, welfare collectivism has had immense importance in the degree to which it has helped to reduce working class alienation from capitalism and its institutions.

But its effects have also been considerable on that segment of the middle classes which has traditionally 'sided with the workers'. For one thing, it has helped to diminish the feeling of guilt which has always been a component part of the espousal by middle class radicalism of working class claims. In this sense, it has reduced the impulse to alliance. But it has also produced among a good many socialists a feeling of resentment against the working classes for their acceptance of the benefits of welfare collectivism and their reluctance, not least because of that acceptance, to play the historical role of gravedigger of the old order which it alone can play.

I don't know how many socialists have been alienated from the Labour movement because the working classes refuse to dig. I should guess a good many.

The contemporary pattern of 'industrial relations' illustrates similarly varied and divergent tendencies. Trade unionism itself has long lost the terrors it held for employers and the owning classes generally. So long as it remains mainly confined to the collective sale of labour on reasonable terms (and it mostly does), employers find it a more or less acceptable element in the process of economic activity. Of course, it is often disagreeable to employers in that it interposes between them and those who depend on wages for their livelihood a degree of protection which makes the daily confrontation between the 'two sides of industry' a less one-sided affair. Still, trade unionism, while pressing for and often obtaining a 'larger share of the cake' (in itself a revealingly limiting formula), also tends to discipline labour and moderate its claims within bounds that admit of bargaining.

As heads of large enterprises which they do not wish to see jeopardised, trade union leaders, bent on reasonable settlements, i.e., settlements which can be made to appear reasonable to employers, are bound to find the animation of the commodity they sell a matter for regret, unless that animation can be strictly regulated. This is obviously not the only factor making for the progressive bureaucratisation of modern trade unionism, but it is certainly an important one, and the one most obviously responsible for the alienation of those who bargain from those who are being bargained for. Nor is the impact of trade union bureaucratisation confined to trade union members. Here too, there has come into being among many socialists a profoundly ambivalent feeling in regard to trade unions. Their every instinct tells them that trade unions must be strong and highly organised; but they also fear the bureaucracy and dislike the bias towards orthodoxy and caution on the part of trade union leaders which seem to follow strength and organisation like faithful shadows. More and more, they see trade unions as constituting new quasi-irresponsible power domains in a society increasingly riddled with them.

Marginal collectivism, however, has added another facet to trade union life which is an important part of the more general trend towards the organisation and regulation of economic life. Employers and wage-earners, both highly organised, are engaged less and less in a face to face dialogue. The State is now a regular and actively involved third party in the conversation. And State intervention, regulation and arbitration also powerfully help to foster the notion of the State's neutrality. However much it may be argued that State intervention has a positive bias against

labour's claims in the long run, and often in the short run, it still remains true that the State is often compelled to see industrial strife from a point of view a good deal broader than the point of view of the individual employer and may press for solutions to any given industrial dispute which, while not wholly meeting the claims of labour, yet do not give a total victory to employers either. That trade union leaders now regularly clamour for State protection against employers suggests that they expect *some* protection from it; and often get it.

What we are in fact witnessing is a steadily growing integration of trade union activity into a controlled system of economic organisation. Private, autonomous, self-regulated trade unionism is becoming as obsolete as private capitalism itself. Contemporary capitalism cannot afford private trade unionism; but neither can it afford to give to trade unions more than a marginal share in the making of economic decisions. What this means is the institutionalisation of the trade union movement as a permanently subsidiary component of a capitalist economy, unable to affect its operation save within some quite narrow limits. This is a position which many trade union leaders find quite acceptable, provided they are allowed to make just a bit of a splash. To expect unions in this kind of economic system *not* to be bureaucratic is naive.

If labour cannot remain private in our present system, neither can industry. Lord Derby's dictum that a man must be allowed to do what he wills with his own is now less true than it ever was. By sheer necessity, the State and industry are now close allies and the partnership, though irksome to industry in some of its aspects, is generally recognised as inevitable and ultimately beneficial - not least to industry itself. Oddly, however, it is the irksome aspects of the alliance which has always impressed the Labour Party most, so that the control and regulation of industry have always figured in Labour programmes as daring incursions on capitalist territory, and as in some ways designed to undermine capitalism. This illusion, for it is an illusion, is of course encouraged by capitalist hostility to many forms of State intervention. 'So long as they squeal, we must be hurting them' is Labour's profound conviction. But people often squeal when receiving an injection, even though the injection improves their health. In sober truth, State control and regulation is no more the enemy of capitalist enterprise than is welfare collectivism. Of course, the 'national interest', as interpreted by the Government of the day, may conflict with the immediate interest of this or that sector of the economy, and some forms of control may be resented by all of private enterprise. But what matters here is the overall impact; and it seems clear that State control and regulation, in its overall impact, does not undermine

capitalist power or for that matter capitalist profitability. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that, in a predominantly capitalist economy, State intervention must by necessity be designed to strengthen capitalist viability. It must inevitably, as the Labour party has now explicitly admitted, aim at the *improvement* of the system's operation.

There is a lesson to be learnt here from the experience of Nazi Germany. No capitalist economy has ever been more tightly regulated and totally mobilised than the German economy under Hitler. Yet, though the Nazis imposed their will and purposes on every facet of German economic life, and had, for obvious reasons, no difficulty in eliciting obedience, they did not destroy German capitalism nor even substantially transform it. And if Nazi experience seems too alien to be relevant, there is British war-time experience to draw upon. The British economy was thoroughly regulated and controlled during the war years; but British capitalism did not emerge from that ordeal notably weakened.

State intervention and capitalist power are not antithetical. The decisions of the State in regard to economic affairs are not even taken independently of business. Nor could they be, since the execution of these decisions must largely depend on the co-operation of business. In fact, it is less and less realistic to speak of State power and business power as distinct, let alone antagonistic entities; the two are ever more closely intertwined and the 'leaders of industry' (significantly, this never refers to trade union officials) are well entrenched in the vast apparatus of control through which the State seeks to ensure essential minima of co-ordination and cohesion. The controllers control themselves. And the appearance of trade unionists on the boards of regulatory agencies hardly invalidates the pattern of capitalist control.

This is not the result of some vast conspiracy. An economic system predominantly based on the private ownership and control of the means to life cannot be administered and regulated save with the participation of the representatives of business. To believe otherwise is to miss the heartbeat of the system. State intervention can superimpose a bureaucratic apparatus upon the operation of business enterprise. It cannot supersede it.

The point may be illustrated differently by reference to the nationalised industries and services. In theory, nothing could be more socialistic than the public ownership of basic utilities and had the Tories been returned to power in 1945, they would certainly not have embarked on a nationalisation programme. But it can hardly be doubted that they would have found it essential, given the needs of the economy, to maintain and possibly to extend war-time controls and that these controls, as applied to basic utilities

would have involved a high degree of public accountability and State intervention. But nationalisation, *so long as it remains confined to a marginal part of the economy*, does not involve much more than the radical extension of the principle of control. This is why the Tories, though they continue to dislike the nationalisation of basic utilities on principle, have learnt to accept it in practice; they have found that it need not seriously weaken the operation of capitalist enterprise and might even be made to strengthen it.

This too is something which Labour finds it difficult to believe. Like Owen who saw his co-operative communities as islands of virtue in a sea of competitive greed, so has Labour nursed the fond illusion that the nationalised industries could be bastions of socialism in capitalist territory, with an internal life radically different from life outside, and moved by a dynamic altogether different from the dynamic of capitalist enterprise. But the 'public sector', so long as it remains a marginal part of the economy, cannot be made to obey criteria of behaviour fundamentally different from those which prevail in the 'private sector', and its management must remain, if not exclusively, at any rate to an important degree, geared to considerations and habits similar to those that govern comparable giants in the 'private sector'. Hence the complaints now so often heard that there is little to distinguish the life of the nationalised industries from that of large-scale private enterprise. But those who complain are mistaken when they suggest that nationalisation has 'failed'. On the contrary, it has succeeded very well in the limited objective of improving the efficiency of a part of the economy which capitalist enterprise had found it increasingly difficult to handle properly. It was always short-sighted to believe that marginal public ownership could do more and constitute a socialist, as well as a nationalised, part of a capitalist economy.

The last point I wish to note in this context is how greatly the militarisation of the economy since 1939 (and the process was only temporarily checked in the immediate post-war years), has enhanced the drive towards State intervention in and control of economic affairs. Modern military strategy is largely a function of civilian production geared to the requirements of the military. The State, the Army and business, now form an interlocking directorate, whose close integration is essential to 'defence'. Business is not involved in the running of armies; but the military now greatly impinges on the running of business. That is perhaps why retired Army men so often find a seat on the boards of industry. In one capacity or another, they have been there before.

I have been arguing so far that the logic of capitalist development is driving us with irresistible force towards forms of economic

organisation which bear no resemblance to the image of capitalism contained in the formula 'free enterprise'. All that we know of the Labour Party's past practice and present programme suggests that it is eager to give expression, to be the agent of these forces and to facilitate the adaptation of capitalism to its inherent needs. In this sense, it is now tending to be the neo-capitalist party *par excellence*.

For it to be otherwise, it would have to seek the transcendence of the categories of capitalism in the only way in which these categories can be transcended, that is, by extending public ownership to the point where it encompasses the predominant part of the economy. This its leadership does not at present intend to do. It will, no doubt, re-nationalise road haulage when it is returned to office; it may restore public ownership of the steel industry, and this would certainly be a step forward, which is why there may well be a determined attempt to evade the promises made in regard to steel; the next Labour government may also take under public ownership some unfortunate firm or other which is not 'serving the nation well' whatever that may mean.<sup>1</sup> But everyone remotely interested in politics knows that the present leadership of the Labour Party does not see these measures as forming part of a continuing programme of public ownership and that it does not believe in its radical extension.

But this hostility to public ownership, I would repeat, is less important than the present willingness of the larger part of the Labour movement to tolerate it, and indeed to endorse it. Labour leaders are short of breath in anticipation; but it does not look as if a majority of their followers are themselves all that eager to supply them with oxygen. The Labour movement may not have lost the dynamic which wins elections; but it does not at present possess the dynamic which turns electoral victories into important milestones on the road to a socialist society.

There is a majority of the Labour movement for whom common ownership has now little appeal, and it is therefore content to follow orthodox Labour leaders and rethinking unsocialists in the exploration of the bypaths of social reform. In part, this contentment stems from a simple failure to grasp the fact that socialism without common ownership is an absurd contradiction in terms. In part, it is the result of a continuous stream of hostile propaganda to which it is yell nigh impossible to remain wholly immune over the years; and in part too, it is the result of the experience of nationalisation in the post-war years. But mainly, I think, it stems from the post-war

<sup>1</sup> The 'serving the nation well' criterion for public ownership, which permeates *Industry and Society* is itself the best illustration of the intense bias against it "which is now characteristic of the Labour Party's present decision-makers.

capacity of capitalism to avoid catastrophic dislocation, mass unemployment and a sharp fall in the standard of living.

Given the economic mess of the inter-war years, it is not surprising that the notion of common ownership, of the planned and rational use of society's resources for the greatest good of the greatest number, should have exercised a powerful appeal to the Labour movement. But the mess of the inter-war years is now two decades away and an absolute bore to a whole new generation now coming to adulthood and maturity. In fact, the economic climate of the last twenty years has been quite propitious to the neo-Keynesian theoreticians of the Labour movement, such as Mr. Crosland or, in necessarily more muted terms, such as Mr. Gaitskell.

There is no point in Socialists thinking that the present boredom with and indifference to our society's economic base is going to change miraculously and overnight into a mass enthusiasm for its transformation, or that an undefined set of favourable circumstances will suddenly make common ownership the policy of the Labour Party without continuous mass pressure. This it *not* to say that more favourable circumstances for the propagation of the socialist case will never occur and that the mass pressure will never be generated. What it does mean is that it will take time.

If this be true, Socialists must attune themselves to the realisation that they are in for the politics of the long haul.

### ///. *The Politics of the Long Haul.*

The realisation that the question of the transition to socialism is not at this stage part of the agenda of politics in Britain may be frustrating to many Socialists but it need not be paralysing, nor need it send one rushing to the cultivation of one's garden. On the contrary, it seems to me to provide a much needed sense of perspective and it helps to avoid an exaggerated gloom at this or that failure, disappointment or defeat.

But that stage of perspective must, of course, do more than provide one with a quasi-mystical belief that all will be well in the end. It must provide an agenda of theoretical and practical priorities.

Very high on that agenda, there is the need for socialists to make clear once again, but in the vocabulary of the 1960's, *why* common ownership of the means to life is the key to socialist change. This demands more than a pious repetition of the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' formula. It demands more than a devoted application to the preparation of a 'shopping list' of industries to be taken over at some unspecified future date; more also than a search for new techniques and forms of common ownership. All this is undoubtedly necessary. But it is a typical Fabian illusion to think that the high road to socialism is

paved with the mastery of administrative techniques. What we need first of all is an adequate grasp of the live forces at work in our society and, to use jargon, of the close inter-connections between society's economic base and such superstructural manifestations of it that it is possible to trace. What we need, in other words, is to relate so much that makes up the total culture of this society to the economic system which underpins that culture. Socialists must at least seek to relate phenomena like the erosion of political democracy, the debasement of cultural values, the brutalisation and trivialisation of life, the international dangers we face, to the fundamental unhinging there now exists between existing economic forces and the obsolescent social forces which feed upon them.

I should deny that this is a mere academic exercise, nor do I in any case think there is anything 'mere' about intelligent academic exercises. There is a good deal to be said for clarification at any time, and not less at this time than at any other; perhaps more.

The next job, however, is to carry this clarification to the Labour movement, in other words, to make socialists. There *is* an audience, even if it is now a bored audience, in all that multitude of institutions which go to make up the Labour movement. Nor is the boredom of the audience a fixed factor. Our situation is not static; neo-capitalism is hardly at peace with itself; the growingly corporate economy and the mobilised society it requires are not smooth alternatives to an altogether differently based order of society. On the contrary, the tensions it harbours, far from diminishing, are likely to increase. If this be true, there is no reason to think that the boredom of the audience cannot be turned into a receptive interest.

But making an effective case for socialism now also requires more than an elucidation of the connection between so many of our ills and dangers and our economic and social system; more too than an alluring presentation of the benefits to be derived from their transformation. It also requires a really serious attempt to meet the genuine fears which are in so many people's mind as to the nature of a society with a socialised base. To dismiss these fears as stupid is itself stupid; to ignore their plausibility is to confuse wholesale collectivism with socialism. There is no excuse at this stage of history for refusing to see that the achievement of a socialised economic base does not automatically and overnight resolve a multitude of problems whose solution is, in fact, what distinguishes a socialist society from a society with a socialised base. Of these problems, the problem of democratic control and participation in decision-making is obviously paramount. It, and others, cannot, it is clear, be solved in theory. But awareness of their existence and a clear willingness not to talk them out of exist-

tence with rhetorical incantations is a precondition to the presentation of an effective socialist case. Socialists will not carry conviction if they give the impression that they are only shuffling clichés for want of a chance to shuffle people. To put it somewhat grandly, they must persuade their audience in the Labour movement that common ownership is not intended as a means to the establishment of a technocrats' paradise, but as the material foundation of a socialist humanism; that it is not only a means to the liberation of production but, and at the same time, to the liberation of people; not only a means for the more efficient use of techniques, but a means for the reconciliation of techniques to life.

There is so much which is wrong with the organised Labour movement, and with its only serious political expression, that Socialists often tend to forget all that is right with it. It is enough to compare it with the Labour movement in the United States, or with the divided and demoralised working class movement in France, to realise the asset, actual and potential, which it represents. At the present time, what is mostly wrong with it is that it only contains a minority of Socialists. Above all else, and beyond all other political commitments, this, it seems to me, is the first problem to which socialists must address themselves in the period of the transition to the transition. There are some who yearningly look for a short cut. There isn't one. Now is the time to get *in* and push.