

about nine hours and frequently work extra time collecting delinquent bills.

The government studies show that at present there may be as many as fifteen different companies serving the same apartment house. Many drivers have a route of sixty miles a day which, under a unified system, could easily be shortened to a maximum of twenty miles.

The American Labor Party has committed itself to this policy by advocating that New York City build and operate a municipal pasteurizing plant that will serve as a model for the industry. So far, the Progressive Party of Wisconsin (the state that leads the nation in milk production) and the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota (the state that leads in butter production) have failed to curb the milk racket. Since no other farm product so vitally concerns such a large part of the population, the political importance of a fight against milk profiteering should become one of the crusades of a democratic front. In such a fight, the farmer, the organized workers, and the consumers can be united to defeat monopoly and the reaction that supports it.

WHAT N.L.R.B. HAS DONE

I MAKE no claim for perfection of administration by the National Labor Relations Board. Its members are human beings and so are its agents. I do claim that every external criterion indicates that it has functioned creditably. Its record of favorable decisions from the courts has been good. In every case before it the Supreme Court has reversed the decisions of the Circuit Courts which were unfavorable to the board. In a period of thirty-one months the board has issued 684 decisions, unquestionably the greatest volume of work ever turned out in a similar period of time by any quasi-judicial agency. In the first thirty months of its existence it had avoided the expense and time of formal hearings by achieving settlements "out of court" of 5,404 cases, or 51.4 percent of the cases disposed of in that period. As a most constructive contribution to industrial peace it has held elections in more than a thousand situations in which one or more labor organizations were seeking to represent workers in collective bargaining. Over 400,000 workers participated in these elections. A study made some little time ago showed that in the vast majority of cases after an election had been held the employer entered into contractual relations with the winning union. The board has brought about the reinstatement of nearly 9,255 men alleged to have been discriminatorily discharged. By its actions 178,693 workers have been reinstated after a strike or lockout. It has settled 1,147 strikes involving 185,871 workers and averted 543 threatened strikes involving nearly 150,000 workers. — EDWIN S. SMITH, of the NLRB, speaking before the Second Convention of the United Office and Professional Workers, at the Burlington Hotel, Washington, D. C., Sat., May 21, 1938.

Readers' Forum

Billy Sunday Methods

TO NEW MASSES: Frankly, I do not like the article, "Why I Am Not an Active Communist," in the May 17 issue. I even feel angry at the editor that let such an article be published in NEW MASSES. For who wants to pay his hard-earned dollars for such neurotic dribble?

First of all, I feel that the author is baiting us. Which must be good bait, as I am nibbling on it. He merely wants to find out why all the readers of NEW MASSES are not Communists, and he is taking this method of goading them into making a decision. Much like the insincere methods the old revivalists used to get "converts" to come to the altar. Fish in the crowd and catch a lot of suckers, hoping to catch one fish really edible.

Now, me—I have always been a sucker—so I don't count. I always went to the altar every time the preacher waxed really enthusiastic, as I could hardly bear to see the poor man make such an eloquent appeal and then have no one respond. But after a lot of experience in responding to appeals, I have begun to resent, for the real fish, these nets that ought to catch only us suckers. Eventually all of us suckers got so disgusted with the evangelist taking advantage of the good people that we created a public opinion against "getting saved." Now he doesn't try any more, for recent experience has shown him that he will get only the neurotics and the emotionally unstable. Which is a shame, because there were a lot of bewildered and hard-pressed real folks who could have received a great deal of bolstering up from a sincere religion.

Having lived through the age when folks got some emotional satisfaction and release out of their religion, I object to having the comfort of radical politics taken away from us poor devils. Most of us are still smarting from the beating that the Billy Sundays gave us, so that we are "gun shy." We can recognize the signs of emotional exploitation miles away.

As long as a person is allowed to have a little emotional privacy, there is a lot of comfort in being a radical. I remember the first time I ever got hold of the *Communist Manifesto*, and read it. I was so scared of holding something marked "Communist" in my hand that I shut the door to my bedroom, though there wasn't another soul in the house with me. But when I read this thing written so long ago, and felt the rightness of its statements, I was tingling all over. All my life I had heard returned missionaries tell about some young man out in India, who came from a prominent family much opposed to Christianity. Then by chance this intelligent young man got hold of a copy of the New Testament, and he was so impressed by what he read—by the obvious rightness of it—that he defied his family, was disinherited, and became one of the pillars of the Christian movement in that country. I had always felt, when I heard this story, that smug, complacent feeling that you have when you belong to the right set, the winning school, or the best sorority—all of us church members belonging to a sect that had such power over the poor heathens.

But when I read this *Communist Manifesto* I felt suddenly what the young man felt: the terrible truth and rightness of what he read. There are, of course, two reactions to such an experience. Usually it is that of the rich young ruler who, challenged by Jesus, went away sorrowing, "for he had great possessions." Mostly, of course, that is why we are not Communists. That practically is the reason

which this ghost writer makes your author take. The author would not sneer at himself in any such manner. He would justify himself. This ghost writer makes the author say the things which he thinks are the reason most folks are not Communists. They have "possessions." They are afraid they might lose.

But that is not the reason why I am not a Communist. So there the ghost writer got fooled for once. It happens that I am a doctor. And part of being a doctor is to watch people die. Not always as a result of your mistakes. But folks do die, and before they die they usually have a doctor. So no matter how good a doctor you are, you do see quite a bit of dying. Of course if you see too much, you don't stay a doctor long, so that takes care of those facetious remarks you were about to make. And one sees a lot of these rich young rulers, after they have lived with their possessions all their lives and are about to die. It usually takes them a couple of years to get something and die of it, so the doctor gets quite well acquainted with them and their outlook before the end comes.

Anyway, for one doctor, I am much impressed with the fact that everyone has to die. And by the fact that most people die for nothing. In fact they live for nothing. And when they die, they accomplish nothing the second time. I think that the author (anonymous—the ghost writer thinks that adds to the realism of his fictitious writer) will drink the cup of futility to the very dregs. Nothing is quite so pathetic as to see a person die who once saw a dream but did not have the courage to follow it. The only folks who get any fun out of the superficial round of superficial living are the ones who, though tired to death of it, never heard of anything else. They are like children, who put up with things in their homes and with their parents because they think that that is the way all parents act. No experience, you see, with parents.

But there are other reasons why I am not a Communist. It is not altogether fear; though no one can live through all the Red-baiting which we grow up in, and not have some hair stand up on the back of one's neck about Communists. After all, the great viewers-with-alarm make us think that it is a socially delinquent thing to consider—much like stealing your neighbor's automobile if you happen to feel like taking a little ride. And if one is fairly normal and not inclined to be a rebel against society, it's a rash step to take.

In fact, it is almost like a "conversion." I know, for I was "converted" to Socialism once. I had heard a man, who was the most interesting speaker I had ever heard, talk on Socialism. You see, what he had to say was bigger than he was. That is always an interesting thing to encounter. And I got interested in reading some on Socialism. Finally I went to a "Social Action Conference." I took two friends along, and we went in as "seekers."

This conference was a unique experience to us all. They spent the first day showing the breakdown of the capitalist system. That was an eye-opener to us, and we swallowed everything in big gulps. Then the next day they got to talking about the "cooperative" society. One got the impression that there was some stalling going on, and not being able to locate it, I finally got up and said, "If this cooperative society you are talking about is Socialism, why do you not call it Socialism, and if it isn't, what is the difference and why?"

I learned afterward that I might as well have

exploded a bomb. There was a man there whom they were hoping to get some money out of for some enterprise, and he was timid on this word "Socialism." It seemed he thought it was just too, too radical. So the rest of the hour was spent by person after person getting up to say, "I believe in Socialism, but—" Then the next one would say, "Now, I am not a Socialist, but I believe that the principles, etc.—" After which another pussyfooter got up to say, "We are not trying to make you join the Socialist Party."

In fact, even a novice like myself could see that for some reason the crawfish were having a convention. But after all the crawfish had testified, a man stood up and said, "By the way, I just wanted to say I am a Socialist. I belong to the Socialist Party. And if anyone would like to join, I have here in my pocket some application blanks for membership." Believe it or not, after the meeting I looked this man up, and asked him for a membership application blank. He and his henchmen were so far above the crawfish that they were not in the same kettle at all. And I thought I would like the flavor better.

The point of all this "sharing" is that I felt what we used to feel after we had been converted. I was no longer one of these "believers-in-Socialism-but" folks; I belonged. If anyone asked me right out if I was a Socialist, I was compelled to say, "Yes." And the thrill of standing up to your convictions is something that these folks who slide around on their "buts" ought to realize. They would stand up and walk on their feet for a change.

But that still is not the reason why I am not a Communist. This is like the man who asked the way to Smith's. The bystander said, "Do you see that big white house over there? Well, that is not the place." This is not the reason. But it is the evolution of a reason.

Several months after my "conversion" to Socialism, when I could say, "I am a Socialist, not a Communist," and feel quite radical without being too dangerous, after several months of that, one day through the mail came a copy of *NEW MASSES*. I had never seen or touched anything actually Communist before. But being addicted to reading my mail, I opened it before I knew what it was, and read it from cover to cover. Then I went out in the kitchen and carefully put it in the stove.

Listen, Mr. Editor, did you ever dive off into cold water? Have you any idea what a sudden dose of *NEW MASSES* does to a person? Have you any idea how horrible the cartoons in your paper are? You should be careful, for there may be folks who can't take it.

It happened that this *NEW MASSES* was not coming to me, but to my sister who was in New York and coming home, so she had had her paper transferred. It was several weeks before she arrived so I read each copy carefully, and then meticulously burned it. When she arrived the first thing she said was, "Hasn't my *NEW MASSES* been coming?" She said this right out loud, right in front of the family. Then it dawned on me that it was not some bastard Communist who had gotten my name from the Socialists, but her paper that I had been reading and burning for three weeks. It seemed she had been reading it for months, and obviously was still out of jail.

This gave me great courage. So after that I began to read *NEW MASSES* openly, to lend it to my friends, and to sometimes get one to subscribe for it. Once a couple of us chipped in and sent a three months' subscription to a woman in a neighboring town who wrote to a contributors' column in the daily paper, complaining about Roosevelt being a Communist. We thought maybe she ought to find out first hand what a Communist sounded like, so we sent her the paper. I always wondered if she had it stopped after she had read it a while, or if she renewed the subscription.

And life has been one sweet song. All harmony and melody. Now, this dastardly editor comes along asking, "How come all the readers of *NEW MASSES*

aren't Communists?" What is the matter? Do you have to see results? Aren't you a believer in the potency of your message? To quote scripture at you again, do you remember the story of the devils which were possessing a man who lived at the edge of the city? And when they saw Jesus coming, they begged him to let them alone or, if he wouldn't do that, to command them to go into the swine. So he did, and the swine were so astonished that they ran down the hill and drowned in the sea. I don't suppose we would have had this story preserved to us, except for the fuss that was made by the man who lost his pigs.

Anyhow, why can't you let us alone? What difference does it make to you why we are not Communists? We read your damned paper, don't we? We send you money to keep you out of hock, don't we? What's eating you?

F. P.

Life Enriched

TO *NEW MASSES*: My wife and I were faced with a similar dilemma. Would the rigors of party activity mean the sacrifice of satisfying evenings at home, stimulating social contacts, and occasional theaters, concerts, and lectures? There were other considerations, too. We were quite appalled at the necessity, so we thought, of strict conformity to the party "line" in all our political judgments, to the exclusion of an independent, critical attitude. Finally, there was the "lack of respectability" of being a Communist. Social stigma means nothing to courageous and principled persons, yet we doubted our own capacity to face it.

Intellectual convictions and an overpowering emotional compulsion finally resolved our conflicts. We both joined—but with misgivings. . . . We have found that although we now perhaps spend fewer evenings at home, they are more satisfying. For one thing our reading has developed new perspectives. We enjoy much that formerly we "just never got around to read." Even the *Daily Worker*, which used to get only a rare and rather bored perusal, now is read eagerly every day. We know, almost instinctively, that party membership has given to our reading a new meaning and vitality.

With a deepening understanding of the party, its work and objectives, has come a fuller enjoyment of our evenings with friends. We feel that we have become more stimulating to them and at the same

time more eager to communicate to them our ideas and feelings. As a result, our own social life has been enriched. As for outside pleasures, we find that "benefits" for the party have a way of providing just those plays, concerts, and socials which fit in perfectly with our own esthetic standards.

Senseless Demands

TO *NEW MASSES*: He is not an active Communist because—according to his own testimony—he wants to preserve his individuality, keep his job, bring up his children properly, and have the leisure to read and converse with his wife. It is the first reason, set in the context of the entire article, that particularly interests me. The writer says, "I want to do only what I want to do, and only when I want to do it." This is almost funny, coming from a man who is afraid to participate in a political movement that engrosses his interest, because he might in consequence be deprived of his means of livelihood.

And how many other compulsions must the writer—or anyone else who, no matter how revolutionary his beliefs, must still submit to certain operations of the capitalist system—obey in his daily life? Does he "do what he wants to do" in his job? You can be pretty sure not. Does he bring up his children in exactly the way he wants to, free from any outside interference of schools, religion, or social customs? No—and I am willing to bet that not even those cherished evenings of reading and conversation are as unmarred by the consciousness of bourgeois compulsions as the writer would like to think. Why does he make this strong distinction between the capitalist and the Communist insistence on discipline? Because he does not take a thoroughly realistic look at his present life. If he did, he would find that the tyranny to which he now submits (because he takes it for granted) is far more cramping, and certainly a hundred times more senseless, than any demands that the party will ever make upon him.

He'll Join Later

TO *NEW MASSES*: One who has a family has indeed given hostages to fortune. I sympathize with the writer on that score, but I will not advise him; I will never advise, not knowing all the circumstances. In fact, if I thought the race would end with this generation I'd say, make no sacrifices—let the fascists have it. But the race won't end with this generation. Your family and my family and many other families may suffer now, but think of the millions of families who are going to live in perpetual suffering if some one does not act now. It all takes sacrifice. The fathers yet unborn are going to love their children as much as we love ours. It is for us to say whether they shall enjoy real freedom or live in the squalid feudalism that preceded the rise of democracy—and that accompanies it now in some places.

To adopt the same tactics that have brought disaster in the past would palpably neutralize the effect of my good intentions. I am going to do what I can secretly—contribute, organize, write—until I am fully prepared to take the final plunge. That, I estimate, will be within two years at the outside. From there on I intend to give it all I've got.

Read, Discuss, Criticize!

TO *NEW MASSES*: If there is a solution to the dilemma of a non-party Communist it lies in the necessity to engage in every activity in which the progress and advancement of the human family is a factor; to read *everything* (from *NEW MASSES* to your local newspaper); to discuss everything in which you and your friends are interested; and above all to "mercilessly criticize everything in existence" (Lenin). Even a cursory study of dialectics will enable us to find in advance the best method of overcoming as far as humanly possible any dilemma.



Robert Joyce

REVIEW AND COMMENT

A Letter from London

WHEN Theodore Draper asked me to write a monthly article for *NEW MASSES*, he said that the ordinary American was out of touch with recent developments in English writing. This, of course, goes for the ordinary Englishman vice versa. But a brief survey of these developments will, I hope, be interesting. I am a little nervous of launching on it; because, although in poetry and fiction our writers can hold their own with yours, the general level of criticism (and especially of book-reviewing) is very much lower in England than in America. There is far too much of the literary jargon which arises from mental slovenliness or exhaustion; while our left critics, who should be letting in some fresh air on the proceedings, are still a bit muscle-bound with quasi-Marxist rigidity and in general apt to be overawed by the importance of their task.

Of British writers, the most respected by their colleagues and the "intelligentsia" are Yeats (still putting up a spirited resistance from his ivory tower) and E. M. Forster, who has not published a novel since 1924. T. S. Eliot is admired, but less imitated than in the twenties; he is commonly considered our best critic. W. H. Auden is acknowledged leader of the younger school of poets (though it is, in fact, very far from being a school); while his collaborator in several verse-plays, Christopher Isherwood, is held to be our most promising young novelist. It should be remembered that there are in England a wider gulf and far more numerous gradations between "highbrow" and popular writing than in America; there must be hundreds of thousands of assiduous readers in this country who have never heard of—certainly never read—the five authors I have mentioned.

In the same way, it is impossible to talk about a predominant trend in our imaginative writing during the last ten years, particularly where fiction is concerned. There have been a number of cross-currents, and I will try to chart these now, taking fiction first. With James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and Aldous Huxley, the great influences of the twenties, the territory of the novel was extended—but extended inward, not outward. This dictatorship of the subjective, created to a considerable extent by Freud and war-disillusionment, began to totter when the slump and the rise of European fascism compelled writers to look over their garden walls. The effect of these events was not to make our novelists more susceptible to

European literary influences (the English novel's whole history is a triumph of insularity), but to divert some of their attention from the bed, the subconscious, and the drawingroom to the impact of unemployment, political and economic insecurity, upon the lives of ordinary people like themselves.

We can say, very roughly, that since 1930 the novel has broadened its social basis, has attempted to include not only personal relationships but the modifying of such relationships by the wider movements of society. This is only a rough reckoning, though. Many of our most popular and efficient novelists still write as though there was no war on, making hay with apparent light-heartedness long after the sun has ceased to shine. Even Elizabeth Bowen, our most brilliant and accomplished stylist, remains thoroughly wrapped up in her style and her intuitions. Rebecca West, who has been prominent in progressive activities, continues to write admirably but does not write very differently. Aldous Huxley, on the other hand, has been so profoundly affected by these precarious times that he has buried all his talents in the stony field of a mystical pacifism. It is, unfortunately for literary pigeon-holders, not true that a crisis separates the sheep from the goats: some of the writers we admire most have taken the right turning, some the wrong; that is all there is to it.

With the younger generation of novelists it is a different matter. Almost all of them

who are worth considering have taken the impression of their times. Christopher Isherwood, with his Forsterian treatment of personal relationships, his extraordinary powers of observation and of conveying character through dialogue, has set his most recent studies against the background of pre-Nazi Berlin, and in the process has traveled miles forward from the neurotic, introverted, and acrid Isherwood of eight years ago. Arthur Calder-Marshall is another promising novelist whose writing has changed from the analytic and introverted toward synthesis and realism; his last novel, *Pie in the Sky*, is a notable experiment in the direction of showing a cross-section of society with interrelated levels. Jack Lindsay, another left-wing writer, has attempted the same thing, with considerable success, in his just-published historical novel, *1649*.

Our novelists, most of whom still spring from the middle classes, suffer—to an extent that their American fellow-writers do not suffer—from the confined upbringing of that class; they have had little or no experience outside it, no living contact unless that of political activity with the working class, and in consequence their subject matter is severely limited. We have a number of rising proletarian novelists, though nothing that could yet be called a "proletarian school." It is to these—men like Ralph Bates, Simon Blumenfeld, John Sommerfield, James Hanley, V. S. Pritchett, Leslie Halward—that we look for the new realism: whether it will be in every case the kind of Socialist realism which Ralph Fox outlined in *The Novel and the People* remains to be seen. At least we can be thankful that these writers are writing of the life they know, a life which has never before been explored *from within* by English novelists.

It is partly this dearth of experience outside a class which they have now rejected that has turned two remarkable Communist writers to allegory. Rex Warner's *Wild Goose Chase* shows a strange blending of Swift and Fielding with Kafka, which has fluttered the left-wing critical doves on both sides of the Atlantic. Edward Upward's *Journey To the Border*, considerably more Kafka-esque in manner, presents a more clearcut moral than *Wild Goose Chase* and has therefore been let off with a caution. This is not the place to chatter about the pros and cons of allegory. But, while admitting the potential danger of it, I can see no reason why it should abdicate in favor of realism—Socialist or otherwise;



Woodcut by Dan Riso