

READERS' FORUM

Trade Secrets

TO NEW MASSES: I too am opposed to giving the Soviet Union the secret of atomic power free for nothing.

Couldn't we get the Russian secret of an economy free from crisis and unemployment in exchange?

BUD REYNOLDS.

Long Beach, Cal.

Woman: Cook or Queen?

TO NEW MASSES: For a progressive journal you have been sadly neglectful of the woman question. Pope Pius XII thought this subject warranted a major speech this week, which the *Times* thought important enough to print in full. It is an old truism that women are half the human race and can be won either for progress or reaction. Capitalism conspires to keep them in the home because this also keeps them backward, apart from the main struggles and currents of the times.

To my way of thinking the round 'of cleaning, cooking and bench-sitting with the child in the park that goes with being home can hardly be considered reigning as queen, to paraphrase the Pope. Yet it is also true that a woman engaged outside must also carry on the home functions, and so has a double burden, which the progressive movement must recognize. This is one of the reasons why we women have a special problem. When I belonged to a union most of whose members were women, and leaders men, and raised the question of additional woman leadership, I was told that the men were better in these capacities and contributed more. Maybe so—but special steps have to be taken to draw women into leadership as against all the traditions, customs and public opinion which conspire to keep them in the background. Even when women achieve responsibility, how often is this in the form of secretary or treasurer rather than chairman!

During the war we made certain gains now in danger of being wiped out. You have made passing references to the seniority provisions in unions, and practically none to the pending elimination of government-supported day care nurseries, to mention but two issues. These government-subsidized nurseries are restricted to women who *have* to work. It would appear that public opinion does not yet support nurseries for women who *wish* to work, or to study, or to make some other contribution outside of the home greater than can be made inside. Wouldn't mankind have had a great loss if Madame Curie, let us say,

had been unable to pursue her research because she was tied down with housework and children?

There is some professional evidence that a mother's personal care is essential until a child is two or three years old, but after this period, in my opinion, group care and experience are invaluable for optimum development.

And now a word to Mr. A. G. in your issue of October 23 regarding "New Paths for Psychoanalysis." I do not see that the author had any disagreement with him about the contributions that psychoanalytic therapy could make to the progressive movement. The new "personal service" divisions of unions such as the NMU show that they recognize such an approach can be helpful to their members. Dr. Wortis showed how these long-used theories need to be brought up to date by taking more cognizance of social conditions and the larger world in which the individual lives, rather than solely by helping straighten out the inner life of the individual and helping him to adjust to a society which may itself have neurotic features, such as mass unemployment.

Best wishes from an old subscriber,

Mrs. F.

More on Wortis and Freud

TO NEW MASSES: Freud's "scientific method for understanding human behavior is essentially antiquarian and biological," writes Dr. Joseph Wortis in his recent article,



"The Psychoanalytic Tradition" [NM, October 2]. A little later on he objects that "Freudianism . . . has almost completely lost interest in the material physiological basis of mental function. . . ."

And is not "the material physiological basis" a *biological* basis?

These contradictory formulations are merely typical of the greater part of Dr. Wortis' article, which abounds in faulty reasoning and gross misrepresentation of Freudian concepts.

Dr. Wortis writes as though Freud separated the mind from the body, and society from the individual, and then proceeds to condemn Freudism for overemphasizing the mind and the individual, respectively. How far this is from what Freud actually said can be easily determined by a systematic study of his writings. Of course, one can find many things in Freud that are unacceptable. However, it is quite a different matter to pick out a paragraph at random from his many works and to use it as argument against Freud's basic theories. How often have we been angered when quotations from Marx and Lenin were used in such manner! Shall we say Marxism is not good for predicting the future course of history because once Marx wrote an obituary for the Czech nation?

To reply fully to Dr. Wortis, it would be necessary to write voluminously. I hope that the readers of NEW MASSES will seek the facts of Freudism from Freud himself, and not from an assortment of revisionists. . . .

SYLVIA SCHNEIDER.

TO NEW MASSES: Having read with very considerable interest and stimulation the two articles on psychoanalysis by Dr. Joseph Wortis [NM, October 2 and 9] it is with some disturbance that I see them attacked and sharply criticized by a reader. What to me seemed like the fresh air of a window opened on a stuffy room, I find instead characterized as "pompous confusion of meaningless phrases" and "unsavory hash."

Was I so easily fooled and misled by what I felt to be refreshing, encouraging and forward-looking in the Wortis articles, or is this criticism by A.G. [October 16] just another example of what seems to have been, since time began, the fate of every newly-ventured reach of human thought?

It would be helpful to have some other opinions.

GILBERT WILSON.

New York.

TO NEW MASSES: I would like to know whether the articles by Joseph Wortis are meant for the readers. If they are, why doesn't he employ a more simple style and make them more understandable. Perhaps they are meant for the student of psychoanalysis, or the intellectual only. In this case I am out of it completely.

F. N.

TO NEW MASSES: Wortis' articles on psychoanalysis [NM, October 2 and 9] and the one in the Summer issue of *Science and Society* were of great interest to me. I think

they contributed something to the evaluation of psychoanalysis and to suggesting a better future for it, but I believe they still omitted the main potential use of psychology for labor. This is the delineation of a sexual morality suitable to our time.

The morality of the past was tied to the church, property, or the needs of various elites. The poor stumbled along as best they could without benefit of any guidance based on a factual study of the natures of men and women. If it is true that human nature is largely a constant, then obviously some sort of morality could be based on this constant along with the variables of a given society.

Wortis' criticisms of Freud seemed to me valid but unsatisfactory. Freud was an honest scientist against great odds, but his subject was almost exclusively the middle class male. Freud's efforts to delineate the role of the unconscious seem to me most valuable. . . .

Chicago.

FAITH RICH.

This Time

TO NEW MASSES: Our domestic and economic enemy No. 1—unemployment—cannot be bombed out. But it can blow up. My approach to the problem of a mixed economy is that of a white-collar worker, long a supervisor and administrator in both private enterprise and a government agency. The future has its beginnings in the past and therefore I must go back to the days of the Great Depression. All the normal processes of our great country slackened and stalled. We, the nation, had actually slept through our bloated prosperity. The awakening was more like a longer sleep, descending into a nightmare, as unemployment spread from thousands into millions, family savings were exhausted, possessions pawned or sold, and creditors could undertake no more risks. The depression rolled in like a tidal wave.

Then the sad, pride-breaking spectacle of relief—all races, all creeds, being forced, in desperation, to accept aid of a kind which ignored human price and dignity. They were dark days, and whether you wish to remember them or not, their impression remains indelible upon the pages of our history.

Born of necessity, work-relief, PWA and WPA, loomed as a temporary salvation. Why, a man could at least *feel* that he was earning his bread, and that *was* something. Yes, that was something, but not *the* something hoped for.

The attempt to alleviate mass penury was publicized into an even deadlier form of abasement. A man was looked down upon by his more fortunate contemporaries. ("It is the taxes I pay which are keeping you.") Private employers counted a man's absorption by such an agency as a sure sign of his lack of ability. ("If you were possessed of any employable qualities, you wouldn't be where you are now.") Employment agencies filed his application and, in most cases, it stayed filed. ("Private employers will not consider applicants from WPA, or relief. They are already provided for.") Investigators came to the project for periodic questioning of the worker. ("We have a report that you are also

working in a fruitstore on Saturdays.") And political pressure of both brands was frequently brought to bear.

Now, all bodies can react favorably to the guarantee of enough to eat. But all minds cannot react favorably to the method by which the guarantee is obtained. So the struggle for existence—and self-respect—went on.

Basically, the idea behind work-relief was good. But the hoped for reabsorption of human labor by private payrolls never materialized sufficiently to diminish, much less abandon, the proposition of feeding men through public funds. With increasing tragicness once profitable trades became dead trades. At the beginning of World War II, with millions unemployed, there was a woeful lack of trained labor because men were long ago sacrificed to interests detached from common welfare.

Now we come to reconversion. We come to unemployment. We come to unemployment compensation. When, and in what manner, do we come to *job insurance*?

Unemployment insurance is not relief as we knew relief in its depression terms. But it is stabilization through an individual's non-earning period. But what we Americans prefer, and will insist upon, is—*jobs*—which brings us to job insurance, be it the Murray Full Employment Bill, S-380, or a like piece of legislation.

That as many of us are as well off as we are today we owe to labor's continual efforts to improve itself and to retain the gains it has made. The fight must continue. But we must also strive for a labor demand equal to the labor pool. Conceivably, industrial progress and capacity to produce will frequently run ahead of consumer demand and purchase. That is why there is no alternative to a mixed economy.

The size and cost of a public works policy will not only fluctuate, but will depend entirely upon the success of labor's pressure upon business and industry to provide the full employment which financial security for each home requires. In a last analysis, no monetary cost can be considered too great. The preser-

vation of a nation's people in peace time is as important as the destruction of a nation's enemy in war time. The government's part in the operation of the new public works must be *non-partisanly administered*, and a distinct entity from civil service. The nature of the new public works is as important as the pay-checks which will be derived from them. White-collar or construction, they must be adequately planned and not solely a stop-gap invention.

This time, public works must be intelligently administered, dedicated to training, utilizing and keeping alert the training and skill of men and women dislocated from private employment. Our new public works should provide a constant pool of active workers from which a three-interest board of administration, labor, government and business, can draw to fill the needs of more lucrative employment.

The issue of full employment and the mixed economy it engenders is large, shot full of controversial details. But the demand which overshadows all else is that useful jobs must be provided. Let us see that it is done.

R. S.

Philadelphia.

"Thou Louse"

TO NEW MASSES: Here is a poem dedicated to a man whose behaviour is decidedly Rank-in Congress:

*Thou blot upon the page of human progress
Thou wart upon the face of history
Thou stench within the nostrils of our Congress
Thou lowest low of southern infamy.*

*Thou roadblock on the highway of the future
Thou louse within our legislative shirt
Thou moral wound too gangrenous for suture
Thou offal-heap of Jim-crow, Poll-tax, dirt.*

*If one could girdle earth at the equator
Or, at opposing poles the planet span
He still could not encompass baseness greater
Than thine: thou insult to the name of man.*

ERNEST E. MAIR.

(Metro. Chap. 31, FAECT, CIO)

Lloyd-Rodgers Local.

New York.

Memo

TO NEW MASSES: We have taken NEW MASSES for over three years and wouldn't be without it. I must admit we are not really Marxists in the way we'd like to be—that of knowing Marx and Lenin as one should. Yet during the past year I sensed a difference in your magazine that I didn't understand. Since the Duclos letter I feel a difference in your magazine that makes it more understandable and enjoyable, though at first I didn't agree that the policy of the Communist Party had been wrong. I think now that the Marxists must be back "on the beam" again.

IRENE B. HULL.

Seattle, Washington.





THE JEWISH WRITER

Further Comments by Karl Shapiro, Nathan Ausubel and Isidor Schneider

MR. AUSUBEL's article, "The Jewish Writer's Dilemma" [NM, July 31] raised a question which I think did not exist before: namely, that the Jewish writer must decide "whether he is going to write about Jewish life or ignore it altogether." As a counter-question I would like to ask how many Jewish writers have felt the need in our time to express their Jewishness; and as a corollary, if they have not felt this need, is it, as Mr. Ausubel says, because they prefer the camouflage of an adopted nationality (American, French, Russian or German) or because the dilemma doesn't really exist?

Let me use myself as my most familiar example. I am Jewish and I am a writer but I do not consider myself, and am not considered, a "Jewish writer." Which is to say that what I write about, how I write, and who I am read by, have no bearing on my Jewishness. In Australia I was introduced as an "American writer," a title which did not strike me as inaccurate. Several people who had read my poems were surprised to learn that I was a Jew. My point is that I don't think the writer who happens to be a Jew has any more obligation to his Jewishness than a Christian writer has to his Christianness. It is a personal question entirely and must be dealt with personally.

Mr. Ausubel deals specifically with the guilt-and-innocence motives of Jewish writers handling (or not handling) the Nazi massacres. But to emphasize the massacres of the Jews at the expense of other Nazi atrocities (the murder of Poles, Czechs, Russians, war prisoners, liberals and dissident political elements of all kinds) is to obscure the real issue of Nazism. In Germany anti-Semitism dropped to the gangster level, as did everything else in German life. The "higher" levels of anti-Semitism such as the democratic countries enjoy are also part of the larger potential atrocity of fascism. It would be well to remember that the Jews who perished in Germany were victims and not slaughtered saints. I do not think it is

fitting for a Jewish writer to isolate the Jews from the other, more numerous, victims of Hitlerism.

I think Mr. Ausubel's article boils down to the very interesting question: Why don't Jews write about themselves? The first answer that comes to my mind in this connection is that it is unseasonably reactionary to ask a Jewish writer who does not *feel* his Jewishness to try to recapture or create Jewishness in his writing. In poetry at least I have noticed for some years that national and racial (and even sexual) lines have become blurred. I too would like to discover a contemporary poet who writes deeply and stirringly as an American, an Englishman, a Catholic or a Jew. But such is not the current idiom.

It would be artificial, would it not, to revive racial or national memories which are moribund or dead? And is not Judaism too factional and non-missionary in our era to cultivate the Judaistic qualities of its poets and novelists? The tendency of most Jews, as Mr. Ausubel points out, is to escape the confinement of the Jewish social orbit as early as possible and to explore a wider and freer environment. There is nothing inherently reprehensible in this exodus, which is in fact a criticism of a minority society which has lost its cultural vitality. A religion without centralization of authority or living critics and prophets has little to offer the artist who is concerned with more than race nostalgia or neighborhood sentimentality.

I think the cultural problem of the Jewish writer can best be articulated on the religious plane. One must experience the continuity of the heritage in order to participate in it or derive profit from it; but nearly all Jewish writers of my generation have been disaffected from religion by one political philosophy or another.

It is criminal, in a sense, that no Jew *qua* Jewish writer has dealt with the religious implications of the Nazi nightmare. The most telling remarks in this connection which I have read in the last five years were by Hermann

Rauschning, the democratic convert and ex-Nazi. The Germans, Rauschning said in effect, spearheaded the Christian will to destroy its ethos, the root of which is the Mosaic Law. In my opinion, a Jewish writer (if he takes it as his province at all) must treat with Judaism on some such terms and develop an affirmative Jewish psychology which transcends professional Judaism or the talmudistic confusion of Jewish politics.

I think Mr. Ausubel has done a service by bringing these problems to light.

KARL SHAPIRO.

IN HIS letter Mr. Shapiro raises a variety of interesting objections to statements I made in my article. Due to the limitation of space I shall try to deal with only a few of these. His reflections on religion, I believe, are somewhat remote from the question at issue.

1. Mr. Shapiro states: "... I would like to ask how many Jewish writers have felt the need in our time to express their Jewishness."

Possibly Mr. Shapiro has not discussed this matter with many Jewish writers, especially in the past two years when the awareness of the Jew *as* Jew has become painfully acerbated by the crimes of Jew-baiting fascism. The plain fact is though that a good many *have* written about Jewish life, problems and character. To mention but a few: Jakob Wassermann, Arnold and Stefan Zweig, Max Brod, Joseph Roth, J. R. Bloch, Arthur Schnitzler, Andre Spire, Edmond Fleg, Georges Duhamel, Ilya Ehrenbourg, Isaac Babel, Rebecca West, Louis Golding. And in the United States: Edna Ferber, Michael Gold, Meyer Levin, Albert Halper, Daniel Fuchs, Samuel Ornitz, Henry Roth, Howard Fast, J. H. Lawson, Elmer Rice, S. N. Behrman, Edwin Seaver, Sidney Kingsley, Irwin Shaw, Clifford Odets, James Oppenheim, Louis Untermeyer, Isidor Schneider, Alter Brody, Martin Feinstein, Robert Nathan, Waldo Frank and others.

2. Mr. Shapiro states: "... I don't think the writer who happens to be a Jew has any more obligation to his