

besides wasteful consumption\* attaching to the society life. This source, I take it, is exclusiveness. Exclusiveness is the greatest of all factors in making any group prestigious—exclusiveness makes royalty prestigious to commoners, the church to laymen, men to women, elders to their juniors. It is upon its exclusiveness that the society life most depends for its charm and for its power. By keeping people out it makes them want to get in. Wanting to get in they become willing to comply with the entrance conditions, entrance conditions first of a comparatively large circle and then of circles within circles. To be in society is one thing, to be in smart society is another thing. But in either case the entrance conditions are largely conformity to the standards set by those within, standards, as we have noted, of consumption, but also non-economic standards in special modes of living, of dressing, of eating, of talking, of feeling and of thinking, and first and foremost standards of exclusiveness, i.e. of willingness to exact conformity of others. Obviously we are dealing here, are we not, with caste psychology, with a caste complex? As in any caste in India or elsewhere, in "Society" conformity is required in matters of dress, of food (eating in accredited places or having food served in accredited ways), in matters of shelter or of place of shelter (living in fashionable streets or fashionable parts of town, going for the season or the summer to fashionable resorts), in matters of language, of occupation, and of mating.

Conformity is as necessary in this American caste as in castes elsewhere, but between it and other castes there are two important distinctions. The first distinction is one that keeps us as a rule from recognizing this social classification as a caste at all. Since its membership is composed on a basis of effectual desire, as we have noted, made up of persons possessed of fitting desires and free from desires that might embarrass or complicate, the caste appears exempt from some of the more blatant forms of caste rigidity, from the rigidity of membership through birth, for example, or through family connection. In the same family can we not see one brother in society and another in the church or in the army, one sister the height of fashion and the other described as too serious or too literary or too artistic to enjoy going out, a decent paraphrase for her outcasting?

The second distinction about this particular American caste has to do with sex. This American caste requires a far lower degree of conformity from its men than from its women. I do not recall ever sitting at a dinner party next to a barber or dancing at a smart ball with a bar-keeper, but on the whole occupation taboos are much lighter upon men in society than upon women. So are dress taboos. An unfashionably dressed man is put up with. So is a man who lives in a cheap lodging in an obscure street. So is a man who ordinarily uses correct English or occasionally eats in an unfashionable restaurant, or even in a fashionable restaurant with unfashionable friends. In women these offenses are hardly tolerated. For it is the women in society who are responsible—not that the men are given greater freedom theoretically, they are merely more negligible. It matters less what they

\* If Veblen had been more attentive to American facts he would not have underestimated woman's direct part in wasteful consumption. To him she is ever the vicarious consumer. In American life, at least, it is her will to power and not primarily that of her male supporter that is gratified by elaborate consumption. The average American woman wants to be in society, and she knows that the more elaborate her consumption the better chance she has to satisfy this social ambition. Is this not one clue, at least, to our high cost of living?

do. The society woman must live according to the rule she makes because she counts. For her, *noblesse oblige*. As for the men, there are no kings in American "Society"—there are only queens. American "Society" is a gynocratic caste, a woman-controlled caste.

ELSIE CLEWS PARSONS.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Marxian Economics Unsound

SIR: The fate of the Socialist party, as debated in your issue of December 2nd, raises a big question, but not a new one. The present situation has long been latent, although only now revealed. Kindly grant space upon it to one who for thirty years has voted with the Socialist party, although never during that time being able to enter it. The significant fact is that for many years some nine-tenths of the Socialist vote has come from those in the same predicament as the writer—unable to swallow the narrow creed which is placed as a bar to membership in and reform of the Socialist party. This fact is eloquent of the wide dissonance between the party's policy and that rising tide of popular protest against commercialism in America of which it is supposedly the political expression. For this protest it has hitherto constituted the only outlet. To date this protest has been the party's main support. The Socialist vote in America has never been a vote for Marxian socialism; it has been a vote against commercialism.

As much as a year ago Mr. Hillquit himself devoted an entire evening before the Intercollegiate Socialist Society to an indictment of the Socialist party and its methods, closely along the lines followed by Mr. Simons. Both he and Mr. Simons recognize the party's un-Americanism. But neither of them condemn at all the errors of principle which lie deeper than mere methods, personalities or phrases, but which explain the presence of all these. Mr. Hillquit closed his criticism with an impassioned appeal for a return to first principles, and Mr. Simons virtually does the same. Yet neither recognizes that the details which they condemn are but the natural fruit of economic principles which are erroneous, un-American and futile. Yet this indictment is urged by one, the writer, who all his life has believed, and still believes, in the early abolition of all commercialism. Mr. Simons says that the party's failure is due to its shallow expediency and greed for votes. But how can this explain defeat? The two old parties are infinitely more shallow and expedient, yet they have gained while the Socialist party has lost. The fact is that it is Marxianism itself which is basically unacceptable to American voters. Here and today, Marxianism is broadly inconsistent with the facts. Whether Marxian socialism ever truly represented European economics I cannot say, but certain it is that since "Das Kapital" was written the whole commercial world in America has become revolutionized away from the philosophies which Marx and his followers have set forth.

You editorially back the urgings of Mr. Simons that the Socialist party be made more American. But how can this be accomplished without the abandonment of all the archaic economic philosophies so widely at variance with American history and present fact?

Broadly and briefly, the orthodox Socialist beliefs are these:

(1) Everything turns upon wages. Higher wages mean welfare for the workingman, and lower ones his loss.

(2) Economic class-lines must be drawn between the

wage-earner and those whose income takes some other form. All who do not earn wages are a burden upon those who do.

(3) It is in his wages that the workingman is exploited. The difference between wages and market-price goes to the employer. That is, the poor are poor by the amount that the rich are rich. The struggle is between wage-earner and employer.

(4) Ergo, the class-struggle, however undesirable, constitutes a step toward socialism. The workman can rise only by class-struggle. The poor need only exert sufficient pressure upon the rich, and the rich will disgorge, making the poor rich.

(5) This pressure is to be exerted by the wage-earners as a class, through the ownership and control by them of all the tools of industry.

(6) American progress has consisted in a gradual centralization of ownership and employment.

(7) Political action is competent to reverse all these symptoms and effect socialism.

But the facts in America, whatever they may be in Europe, are directly inconsistent with every one of these theories, as follows:

(1) Wages (in money) are no factor in welfare. Real wages are paid in things, not in money; and the history of the last century has always shown wages-in-things lowest when wages-in-money were highest. When socialism has been accomplished wages will be lower than now, instead of higher; but they will buy several times as much.

(2) Wages do not determine class-lines between exploiter and exploited. Many, many wage-earners are themselves a part of the economic burden on the poor. Many employers are producers.

(3) It is not in his wages or at the factory that the workingman is exploited. If every employer turned socialist tonight, turning tomorrow's gross income into wages, the condition of the poor would be only slightly and temporarily ameliorated. The workingman is exploited at the shop-counter, not at the factory.

(4) Every step in the class-struggle makes the poor poorer. Every rise in wages, whether won by strike or otherwise, is paid by other workingmen, not by the employer. For eighty years wages have been rising steadily. If wages came from the employed that class must have become steadily poorer; but they have steadily become richer.

(5) No amount of control by wage-earners can affect this in the slightest. Only the consumer has power over the rich, for all commercial incomes come from the consumer, and from him alone.

(6) Ownership has been gradually decentralized during the last sixty years. Huge consolidations and accumulations have plainly been going on, it is true; but this will produce centralization only if the total amount of business remains constant. As a matter of fact, the continual crop of new properties has always outrated consolidation. The trouble with the land to-day is not too much centralization, but the costly anarchy of too little centralization, leading to exaggerated costs in commercial competition.

(7) Political action is futile—except as an expression of public opinion. There exists to-day nowhere on the face of the globe, in the constitution of any government, the power to remedy commercialism. For that lies only in the dollars of the consumer, as they cross the shop-counter; and these are as unorganized, as unrecognized, even by those who possess them, as were the political rights of the people two centuries ago. It is because this totally new power of government must be dredged up from the abysses of the unknown in history that an economic revolution commensurate

with that which secured political democracy is inevitable before socialism can be secured. And when it comes it will have as little connection with any direct, conscious effort of the people to gain the particular right obtained as was always the case in these earlier revolutions for political democracy.

The simple, childlike philosophy of the orthodox Socialists, in seeing the rich merely as having something belonging to them and in starting to secure it by direct attack, is an exact parallel with the political faith of Germany, in her reliance upon force as the solution to every problem and upon ascendancy as the sole basis for happiness. How totally, absurdly un-American is all this tragic folly only Americans can appreciate. Only when the Socialist party has reformed its economic ideas into conformity with American facts, only when it has ceased to exclude all new membership which disagrees with its orthodoxy, which thus might bring progress and reform, can its methods and personalities come into accord with American historic ideals, bringing success with American promptness. Only then can they come into accord with American facts, bringing certainty and stability, and into accord with America's unchanging spirit of democracy—the reliance always upon action by the whole people, excluding every suggestion of class, bringing purity and permanence of liberty.

SIDNEY A. REEVE.

New York City.

## For Socialist Liberalism

SIR: THE NEW REPUBLIC for December 2nd was an extraordinary issue and especially good were the editorial and the article by Mr. Simons on "The Future of the Socialist Party." Is not really the Socialist party very often influenced by foreign and un-American ideas? I am absolutely in agreement with the editor that the Socialist party needs a thorough house cleaning. First, the Socialists of the United States must abandon the old dogmatic delusions *that the conditions of the Capitalist system are the same all over the world, that the working masses are just as badly exploited in Russia as in the United States*, forgetting or deliberately ignoring the fundamental characteristics of each nation, political, intellectual, historic, religious, etc.

It is absurd that a Socialist party of a monarchic Russia or of a militaristic Germany should pursue the same methods of propaganda as a Socialist party of a democratic country like the United States.

The Socialist party must become a national, a genuine American party. It should not concentrate all its activities in industrial centers ignoring such big groups of our society, as the middle, professional classes.

There is a great mass of people who are discontented, who realize that there is something fundamentally wrong with our abnormal system and who would like to see a radical change—people of all classes—and who would gladly listen to the philosophy of socialism—if it were intelligently presented to them.

The Progressive party polled a vote of almost 4,000,000 four years ago. Where have the votes gone this year? They were cast for Wilson—because he was the most progressive man in the field. Wilson received between two and three million votes which were not democratic but non-partisan. They were cast by people who believe in progress and liberal legislation and who thought Wilson was the right man. There were a good many near Socialists among them. If Benson had conducted a more rational campaign—if he had



not made militarism the only issue of his campaign—thus making the people think that the Socialist party is merely a pacifist party—but had discussed American conditions from a socialistic standpoint, then a good many of the Wilson votes would have been cast for him.

But Benson ignored the issues which were for Debs the main issues: high cost of living, unemployment, social insurance, shorter hours, regulation of wages, labor legislation, etc. Benson's campaign was absolutely un-American and no wonder that the American voters preferred Wilson. Debs was running at a time when a Progressive party was in the field and yet he doubled his party's vote.

The Socialist party can only succeed when it becomes a constructive, a reformative and above all a nationalistic political party voicing the needs of the people. In the educational field, however, it should continue its philosophic and economic theories, it should organize various educational forums: there international problems will be discussed. But a philosophy must not be a political issue because at present the people are not ready for it. In one word, the Socialist party ought to continue its energetic propaganda of socialism only in the educational field—as a non-political organization—while on the political side it must become a genuine, constructive party.

Also I agree with the editor that the Socialist press must become a little better. A press that is voicing a new philosophy, a press which is fighting for a human and rational system—must not become as commercialized as the rest of the yellow press. The Socialist press must have the best literature, the finest information. Truth must be the fundamental motto.

There is no reason for the Socialists to be discouraged. The sentiment for reforms is growing rapidly; the sentiment for transformation of our chaotic capitalistic system is evident in all spheres of our society. The Socialist party has a good future in America.

MICHAEL ALTSCHULER.

### For Proletarian Party

SIR: While the editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC may not regard it as complimentary, it is true nevertheless, that your magazine performs the function that a genuine Socialist paper should perform. It is critical of contemporary life without being emotionally intoxicated. At the same time it is critical of the organization which seeks to remedy the conditions. Your issue of December 2nd excelled in both these regards. The reforms advocated in your editorial "How Can the Socialist Party Live," though highly speculative have the merit of being based on genuine defects of the organization. However, in a blundering way, the Socialist party has sought to improve itself in the manner suggested, and in so far as they have carried out the policy, their membership has diminished.

Mr. Simons, in "The Future of the Socialist Party," is perhaps a little too anxious, yet he has shown keen penetration in analyzing the situation and has made some wonderful generalizations. Many workingmen, like myself, have given up their activity in the Socialist party on account of the influx of academicians, preachers, middle-class politicians, and the Home Rule Irish, with their preachments and tricks to foster middle class morality. To-day, they are the dominant factor in the Socialist party, almost to the exclusion of the workingman's influence. Mr. Benson was an anachronism—muckraker, with a socialist label. The Chicago party is owned, body, boots and breeches, by academic

down-and-outs, clientless lawyers, and the Home Rule faction of the Catholic Irish.

Of course, these misfits should have a forum to air their grievances, but workingmen who fully realize that their labor is bought and sold on the market in exactly the same way as "pig-iron, chewing gum and bibles," will not long consent to furnish the excuse and the means of their furthering their political ambitions. And lastly, Mr. Editor, workingmen are not interested or at best, only sympathetically interested, in the cause of Home Rule, the progress of the German arms, or the inroads of Modernism among Catholics, and whether or not Mr. Kennedy, in 1917 A.D., retains his seat in the City Council.

SAMUEL W. BALL.

Chicago, Illinois.

### Need for Congressional Record

SIR: Mr. Dickinson's article in your issue of November 25th on "Abuse of the Franking Privilege" (a thorough and interesting description of an annoying "symptom") does not diagnose the unfulfilled need which underlies the abuse. Just as our modern psychotherapy has penetrated into the hidden causes of so-called "evil" and shown how we must ascertain the unfulfilled desire and find some legitimate outlet for it, so surely we have made sufficient strides in social psychology to avoid our old "reform" method of merely describing and decrying irritating symptoms in our political and social system.

In the same issue there is an interesting account of the remarkable work of Robert Valentine, whose success is well attributed to the fact that he sought to go to the roots of every situation. If, penetrating the surface manifestations, we search for the unfulfilled need which has caused the "abuse," which, following the analogy of personal psychology, is merely the "compromise" an inadequate outlet has forced, we shall find it, I believe, in this case in the necessity of providing our politicians with some means of getting their ideas and propaganda across to their constituents—surely a necessity in a democracy. In addition to the lack of facilities accorded the legislator to enable him to keep in touch with and educate his constituents, there is the thoroughly unsatisfactory provision for the propaganda of candidates, particularly in large constituencies. An unfair advantage is given the rich man or the man who can get the support of the party machine—surely an unsatisfactory arrangement in a democracy. Because of lack of proper means of filling these needs we thus have on the one hand such an abuse of the franking privilege as is described and on the other hand the influence of private capital on politics owing to the necessity of enlisting its support in order to finance any candidacy.

How are we to provide adequate vehicles to meet this purpose? Here is a subject dealing with the technique of democracy which should be thought through and constructively treated. To throw out some raw suggestions, might not in the first place a printing and franking privilege be frankly accorded to legislators under proper restrictions and legislation? Also could not some free method of reaching the public, possibly through a publicly supported journal or publicly maintained halls, be available to prospective candidates? Valid difficulties and objections may spring up in one's mind to such suggestions, but it is certainly well that it be recognized that we have an important question here, which has been neglected.

SAM A. LEWISOHN.

New York City.

## After the Play

HERE is one resident in these parts who cannot easily be Chinified. Only last week, on seeing "The Century Girl," I complained of a congested imagination. Now I have seen "The Yellow Jacket" and I repent. Last week I craved for suggestion as opposed to statement. Now I have had suggestion, just one Celestial suggestion after another, and I yearn for statement as plain as Omaha and as tough as Butte.

Perhaps my expectations were raised so high that actuality was bound to dash them, but only for a few moments, rowed by the bamboo poles, did "The Yellow Jacket" succeed in floating one in what the program calls "exotic joy." For the rest I knew not joy, either exotic or endemic. I knew only a mild discomposure, and a fear as to the consequences of not really liking something which truly normal persons all seem to like. Seldom, indeed, had I heard any drama praised so much as "The Yellow Jacket." Men and women went to it night after night when it was produced some years ago. It won a unique place in the grateful memory of the playgoer, had a true victory of esteem. But despite all urging that my imagination should float, "under the direction of the Chorus, into the realms of delightful fancy and laughter," I stuck in the mud. This brute fact cannot be evaded. And—though one thinks of these things afterwards—I propose to argue why my imagination failed to float, why I slowly slid out of that position where one lies in delicious ease, commander of the sky and the birds of the sky, into a prosaic perpendicularity where one discovers the impossibility of a medium too weak to support one, and too solid to inhale.

"The Yellow Jacket" is an original romance composed by George Hazelton and Benrimo, in the Chinese spirit, so that Chinese theatrical conventions as to action and scenery and music and direction can be employed for the sake of their suggestion to the fancy of the Occidental. The quaintness of Chinese usage, of Chinese simplicity and literalness and playfulness, appealed deeply to the authors, and Mr. and Mrs. Coburn revived the production in the faith that it really had faëry delicacy and charm. The charm was no doubt felt partly to consist in the romance itself, the tale told in poetized language; but it was felt also to inhere in the Chinese way of doing things, of representing death and heaven, for example, of representing combat and travel and all the other things that make for tedium or ugliness on our own stage.

With faëry in mind, I imagined "The Yellow Jacket" was going to be as freshly untheatrical as a performance by the Irish Players. I thought the writing of it was going to be beautiful as any fresh romance is beautiful, as Synge is beautiful in "The Playboy" or Maeterlinck in "Pelleas" or Yeats in "The Land of Heart's Desire." I did not know how its Orientalism would give ecstasy, but such conventionalizations as I had ever imagined, mild though they were, promised a great deal from conventionalization in a thorough sense. There was no limit conceivable to the genuine dispensing with accessories, the use of a table for a palace, and a chair on a table for a mountain, and a lifting of the leg for a horse. With richness in the story, keenness in the emotion aroused by the story, the possibilities of the Chinese method seemed endless. But it depended, as I imagined it, on the intensity of the drama itself, and I supposed "The Yellow Jacket" to be so full of poetic suggestion that the mere wave of a hand would open the door on multitudinous image and sound.

In the story by George Hazelton and Benrimo, then,

I found myself bewildered. It was a story so written as to be pretentious rather than imaginative, flossy rather than poetic, a tissue of words that had to be mouthed to escape banality, and in being mouthed became dull. There are some people, of course, who are wafted afar at the very word Orient, who swim at a phrase into "a river of silvery love on which we can see the flower-boat pass among the lotus flowers." But my impression is one of Vantine's, surrounded by Le Gallienne sauce. It is picturesque but not intensely imaginative. I get no persuasion that I am not in a theatre, watching mere new-fangled make-believe.

It was the deliberate, the accentuated quaintness, of "The Yellow Jacket" that did most to prevent my floating into fanciful realms. Mr. Arthur Shaw was the realistically bored Property Man, but for all the humor of his nonchalance he seemed to me to be bawling it, to be taking not the slightest risk of a gesture or posture missing effect. He was in a relation of quaintness not merely to his audience, which was desirable, but to his function on the stage, which was incredible. He was an unbelievable Property Man. He did not believe in himself as a Property Man, any more than Mr. Coburn believed in himself as a Chorus.

The audience may be to blame. Probably at first "The Yellow Jacket" was performed with delicacy, with a constant conviction on the part of the performers as to their picture of life. Once the audiences failed to respond to these gestures, failed to take the second-story heaven as Chinese take it and failed to have emotion about the story owing to insistence on the antic, then the performers, in all likelihood, became content to rub the novelty in. Now, so far as I can judge, there is no true suggestion about "The Yellow Jacket." A woman may properly exclaim, "It's the cutest thing I ever saw. Don't you think the Property Man is perfectly killing? Don't you think his cigarette is positively darling? Don't you think the hangings are too lovely for words? From the Louis XIV Shop. Don't you just adore the whole thing?" But apart from gratitude to Miss Beatrice Prentice as Autumn Cloud and Mr. George Farren as the Farmer and Mr. Kyle as the old Philosopher and Mr. Bruning as the Purveyor of Hearts and Mr. George Gaul as the hero and Mrs. Coburn's baby, "The Yellow Jacket" left no sense of beauty experienced, of anything but Chinese quaintness capitalized and peddled to the Occidental with musical sentimentality and a few touches of grace and imagery and wit.

"The Yellow Jacket" has become a kind of shibboleth in the New York theatre. It is regarded as almost excruciatingly artistic, the sort of thing that Philistinism cannot appreciate, the sort of thing that must be encouraged and supported and "saved." Perhaps there was a time when it was a poor little blue-gilled baby, when an incubator had to be built around it and people had to protect its life. But now, seeing that rescue-work has been performed and the obtuseness of regular managers circumvented, I venture to confess my dissents. If one could never see work on the stage such as Mme. Bernhardt's company performs in "Hecuba," one might say *nunc dimittis* after "The Yellow Jacket," contrasting it favorably with things like "Flora Bella" or "The Guilty Man" or "Under Sentence" or "The Man Who Came Back." But that is not the alternative. It is not ravishingly satisfactory. It is not honestly enough conceived, or trustfully enough projected, or competently enough performed, to be worth sanctioning as an entirety. One can only deal in such sanctions if one has a harem-like heart.

F. H.