Labor Department — which he undoubtedly makes use of — would not bear it out?

Does the fact that it takes a higher annual income in 1967 to rise above the Government-set poverty level than it did in 1951 make the 50 million or more odd Americans who live below the line any better off? The items that constitute what is termed a "decency" or American standard of living remain as before. They just cost more. Does this make the poor richer?

Mr. Dale would rather play safe, it seems, and equate standards in the United States with those of other countries — an old trick and one that is employed by the apologists for the ruling class in just about every country in the world. He might even be able to substantiate statistically that the rats, bedbugs, and cockroaches in the ghettos and slums of America are better fed than their species — or even than some humans — in other nations. We hardly think that this fact would make the workers who are forced to share their living quarters and food with vermin in the tenements of the Giant one whit better off.

THE DOCTORS PRESCRIBE

Viewing the ailments of capitalism in as detached a manner as possible, we would say that it is afflicted with more woes than elephantiasis. Unemployment, for example, beyond a certain point is bad for the economy since it compels a type of governmental action that can only mean higher taxes. On the other hand, too much employment is another danger to be guarded against since it places the sellers of labor-power in a more favorable position to command wage increases. This danger to the health of the economic system must also be guarded against. As befits a wealthy patient, American capitalism has at its beck and call a coterie of "expert" doctors of economics to diagnose and to prescribe. The treatment that is curcently in vogue among these physicians is termed "The New Economics."

The argument of the current crop of economists (Keynesians) is that it is possible to produce permanent and non-inflationary prosperity simply by forecasting future developments in the business world and having the government act accordingly in its program of taxing, spending and allocation of credit. Alas for the forecasters! The unforeseen and unexpected storms that arise in the world of capitalist economics are beyond the ability of anyone to prognosticate. Last October the Johnson Administration saw nothing but good times ahead in the foreseeable future and took "anti-inflationary" steps by suspending a 7% tax credit it had given business with the object of encouraging further investment. Business was good — too good — in fact, and it was felt by the experts that investment would continue on an upward spiral without an "inflationary" tax cut, that it could be safely suspended for sometime to come, at least until July 1967.

But recent economic news has been more bad than good for the world of business. A new set of figures has been released that shows a decline in industrial production of more than 1% in February, a decline that is particularly ominous since it is the second straight month of decline. Furthermore, although there was no serious rise in unemployment in February there was a sharp decline in overtime work which is taken to indicate coming lay-offs. And business inventories continued to pile up. A new "recession" is either on the way or has already arrived. The expert diagnosticians are not yet certain!

So the doctors of economics advised a withdrawal of their current prescription and advocated a speedy resumption of the previous one — the 7% tax investment credit. The government responded and it now hopes that business will respond by increasing its investment. The ominous, black cloud on the horizon will

somehow become dissipated, is the hope, if business is encouraged to expand its plant further. In light of the figures of the N. Y. Times economics writer, quoted above, on plant expansion in the United States over the last 15 years one can only wonder at the continuing optimism of the doctors of economics. If busts can only be avoided by more plant and equipment expansion where does it end?

THAT "WAR ON POVERTY"

As buyers of labor-power, the capitalists can be forgiven if they strive for a hard bargain. Whatever they spend on charity is peanuts to what a lenient attitude on wages would cost them. To expect a generosity from them in terms of higher than market pay is to expect too much. Competition among the capitalists compel them to fight like tigers to buy the workers' commodity at or even below its value.

On the other hand, how could the capitalists ever be expected to increase their contributions to charity to the point of making life easier for the recipient? A life of wage-labor would certainly be eschewed for a life on the charity rolls. With the continuing example afforded us by the idle rich of how satisfying a life of unemployment can be — if one has the funds with which to enjoy it — who would be interested in punching a time card? With the result that there would soon be nothing left to hand out at the poverty distribution centers and, for once, the lot of the capitalists and the workers would be a common lot. We would all starve to death.

Let us, then, refrain from condemning the Johnson Administration for its cutbacks in the waging of its War on Poverty. Moderation in all things — excepting in profitable business — is a virtue and so the President must moderate his attempt to alleviate the suffering of the poor in the interests of the class he represents, the capitalists. We doff our hats to President Johnson in his all-out effort to keep from rocking the capitalist boat. He is being practical.

But let us, the working class, also be practical. Let us recognize that "wars on poverty" can never result in more than a providing of jobs for a relatively few working people — at the going wage; a providing of graft for the top politicians who administer the programs; a providing of votes for the political party in office; and a continuation of poverty for the recipients.

A realization such as this, plus the revelation that poverty is not confined to the unemployed workers, nor the lower-paid workers, but to the working-class generally, should result in genuine steps being taken to cure the problem. Such steps are not to be expected from the capitalists however. The defeat of poverty is bound up in the overthrow of capitalism — and this is the work of the working class.

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