The WESTERN SOCIALIST

JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

OFFICIAL NOTICE

THE WESTERN SOCIALIST is published by the World Socialist Party of the United States and the Socialist Party of Canada. Subscriptions, donations, articles and correspondence for insertion in **The Western Socialist** should be addressed to the World Socialist Party, 11 Faneuil Hall Sq., Boston 9, Mass., or Socialist Party of Canada, P. O. Box 115, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

8 issues $1.00
18 issues $2.00
Lifetime Sub. $15.00
Bundle rates (in lots of 25 or more) per issue $2.00

The Real Barrier To Civilized Living

The feature article of The Age, Melbourne, Australia, dated Oct. 1, 1960 is entitled "The Barriers to Civilized Living." Herein we read:

"There is much liquid history in great rivers like the Danube, Rhine and Vistula, and the story of the nations, both great and small, is often the story of their separation from one another by mountain chains. They account for Switzerland; they divide the Latin people into Italy, Spain and France, each with its own distinctive life.

"...It was of this (liability of mountains) that W. H. Davies was thinking when he wrote of the 'sin of mountains'. He spoke of the way in which they divide men from each other and keep them divided..."

The same has been said of oceans and deserts.

However, modern communication techniques, i.e., newspapers (together with literate populations), cables, telephones, radio, television and so on, **potentially,** has rendered powerless the inert mass of towering mountain chains to prevent man contacting and communicating with his fellow man. Neither can limitless expanse of oceans, nor desert wastes, nor yet broad, fast flowing rivers be regarded as any serious impediment to the wholesale and split-second dissemination of news, views and information. Whether this mastering of time and space is for the social good or not is determined by the prevailing masters of modern society.

The Second World War revealed how radio could be used to bolster up friendly relations between a group of nations, temporary allies, of differing skin colors, cultures, races, religion, etc. It was used simultaneously to fan and feed the fires of hatred against a second group of opposing nations, also temporary allies, differing also from each other in skin-coloring, cultures, religions, politics, etc.

Thus the mere physical barriers, important as these were till the present century, in "keeping men divided" is not the real answer to "Barriers of Civilized Living." We read on:

"But there are barriers other than physical... It is natural for us to glory in our racial name and to lump the rest of mankind together under a single common name. The Jews called other men Gentiles...The Greeks called all other people barbaroi... hence barbarism.

"This simple naive division of mankind into two groups, ourselves and others, continues to bedevil human relationships..."

Socialists, pondering upon this "naive division" of human society into "ourselves and others," more realistically divide mankind into two warring classes: those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess. The cleavage between these two classes is more sharply delineated by the opposing positions of wage labor and capital. Modern human relationship is bedevilled and sundered by the buying and selling of the commodity labor-power. As long as capitalism continues, the class war, now passive, now open, will continue. And this "Barrier to Civilized Living" perpetuates itself in spite of a common language of the contending classes of any given country (Russia included) in spite of the same religion, cultures, skin color etc.

The "Age" leader continues:

"Within our minds are two barriers. The two mountains of prejudice and exclusiveness. It has required a mighty effort to drive tunnels beneath the European Alps, bringing separated people closer together; it requires effort not less resolute to pierce or to destroy the barriers which must not be allowed to keep us isolated from one another."

It has been shown above, how "exclusiveness" potentially has been abolished by means of radio, television and a daily tidal wave of printed matter together with a rapid spread of literacy. "Prejudice," technically, also is something that could be abolished were these same media of mass communication directed to this end. Actually, prejudice is carefully fostered by radio, television and the press (the "Age" included).

Socialists firmly maintain that the real "barriers to civilized living" is the class antagonism of modern society. We agree that "...it requires effort, not less resolute to pierce or destroy the barriers..." This is best done by the spread of socialist knowledge among "ourselves," i.e., the working class, in order to confound "the others," i.e., the master class. Socialist knowledge, among other things, brings the realization that human society is in constant flux. Capitalism came into being (it is the newest and youngest of all the economic systems), and is destined to become a system of the past. Capitalism has served a vital purpose in the evolution of mankind. Chief among the problems solved by capitalism is the primary one of production. The productivity of labor under capitalism has multiplied enormously over earlier systems. Chief among the problems capitalism cannot solve is the problem of distribution. Capitalism cannot solve this problem: the labor is socialised, wealth created by this socialised labor is privately (corporatively, or state) owned. This is the real barrier to civilized living.

C. PETER FURY

Victoria, Australia

PUBLIC LIBRARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

(Two items from the Times)

London, Sept. 14 — Libraries in the Soviet Union may be free, but to borrow books from them is neither a simple nor entirely private transaction, a Scottish librarian said today.

M. C. Pottinger, the librarian, was describing his recent experiences in the Soviet Union to delegates attending the Library Association's annual conference at Scarborough.

He said a Soviet reader was issued a ticket on which he had to record his name, nationality, party membership, occupation, education, home address, place of work, telephone number, and details of his identity papers.

Inside, the ticket has several columns for details of books that the reader borrowed.

Danville, Va., Sept. 17 — The public library here, closed since May over the integration issue, reopened this week with stricter rules for borrowing books.

For one thing, all the old free library cards have been revoked and new ones cost $2.50.

City manager Edward Temple announced that all applicants for library cards would be required to fill out a new four-page form. The forms, he said, will be given "rigid scrutiny."

The first two pages of the form outline the new system of library operation, and must be endorsed by a personal signature agreeing to "obey all conditions."

Other questions on the form asked the place of the applicant's birth, his college degrees, and his prospective use of the library. He must also name two character references and two credit references, and list the type of books he plans to borrow...

All the chairs and tables have been removed from the reading room, and the librarian, Florence Robertson, reported no mingling of the races in the library.

New Yorker 10-29-60.