Human Labor vs. The Bees

"Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's production in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway. We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labour that remind us of the mere animal. An immeasurable interval of time separates the state of things in which a man brings his labour-power to market for sale as a commodity, from that state in which human labour was still in its first instinctive stage. We presuppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will. And this subordination is no mere momentary act. Besides the exertion of the bodily organs, the process demands that, during the whole operation, the workman's will be steadily in consonance with his purpose. This means close attention. The less he is attracted by the nature of the work, and the mode in which it is carried on, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as something which gives play to his bodily and mental powers, the more close his attention is forced to be.

K. MARX
(Capital, Vol. 1, pp. 197, 198)
Modern Lib. Edit.

WE ARE SEVEN

In *The Western Socialist,* Number 1-1967, we reported an addition in the ranks of the parties of World Socialism, *The Bund demokratischer Sozialisten* of Austria. Unfortunately, when including our Austrian comrades in our listing of Companion Parties we neglected to change the number "six" to "seven." This was a proof-reading error, not an inability on our part to count. For this, the Editorial Committee offers its regrets.

S.P.G.B. ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

From the Report of the Executive Committee to the 63d Annual Conference (SPGB), 1967.

The coming Greater London Council Elections in April have dominated the activities of the Parliamentary Committee. The E.C. has approved a Candidates' Address and 14 members will contest seats in the Boroughs of Camden, Ealing, Haringey and Lambeth. Work is in hand for the printing of 80,000 Addresses and the writing of envelopes and so on for despatch by free postal service. Four agents have been appointed and work is going ahead with press hand-outs (local and national) and with the arranging of indoor and outdoor meetings.

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Editorial Committee Views the News

The Giant Has Elephantiasis

In a New York Times Magazine article (March 19, 1967) Edwin L. Dale Jr., an economics news reporter on that paper's Washington staff, provides us with some interesting statistics on the U. S. economy. For example: manufacturing capacity in the United States doubled since 1951. Furthermore, in the last 15 years American capitalism has added as much new plant and machinery as it built in the first 150 years of its industrial history. And he speculates that the manufacturing capacity may double once more in the next 15 or 20 years.

He goes on to tell us that:

"A Belgian is not overjoyed to learn that General Motors sales in a year are more than his nation's entire gross national product; an Englishman or Frenchman, used to a long history of power and influence, is likely to be resentful at the discovery that U. S. economic growth in one year is equal to half the British or French G.N.P. or the whole of Canada's. And as for the poor countries, their sense of impotence and frustration can only be increased by their awareness of the wealth enjoyed by the vast majority of Americans.

The rest of Mr. Dale's rather lengthy article is devoted to what he believes to be evidence that the United States, despite its vast economic power is not able to "throw its weight around." That it is "not able to achieve (its) foreign-policy objectives" and that it does not enable the U. S. to "dominate" other nations even if the U.S. so desired which, he contends, it certainly does not. In fact, he argues, the only thing it really does mean is that the United States is able to provide a living standard for its citizens higher than anything ever known to man.

Although there is much that could be said in regard to the question of U. S. domination throughout the world in refutation of the Times man, we would prefer, at this point, to concentrate on the question of the "wealthy" American working class.

The type of reasoning employed by the Times scribbler has one thing to be said in its favor. It is "normal" in that it conforms to the average assessment by the average "man on the street." The analysis of the U.S. Giant would have been somewhat more penetrating, however, had the approach been made from a different direction. It would have shown a Giant with elephantiasis (a disease characterized by an abnormal growth of one part of the body — scrotum or a limb — at the expense of the rest of it). For example:

What has been the advance if any, in the *real* wages of the U. S. workers who constitute some 90 percent of the population and who toil in the plants of U.S. capitalism? If the living standard of American workers is higher than those of their class in other lands; and if this is so by virtue of the fact that American capitalism is much more highly developed than that of the rest of the world; is it not reasonable to assume that a sharp increase in the plant, machinery, and sales of the Giant in the last 15 years would bring a corresponding increase in the living standards of Americans, generally, in that same period? But Mr. Dale offers no such suggestion. Could it be because the statistics in the U. S.